the weekly Standard

MARCH 10, 2008 • $3.95

GEN. ODIERNO: THE PATTON OF COUNTERINSURGENCY
FREDERICK W. KAGAN AND KIMBERLY KAGAN

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

1925-2008

JOSEPH BOTTUM
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—Christiana Stoddard and Sean Corcoran

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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A Trudeaumania Postscript

Lionel Chetwynd's description last week ("Obama of the North," March 3) of the damage done to Canada by its charismatic prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau (1919-2000)—and of the disconcerting resemblance between the Trudeaumania of the late 1960s and today's Obamamania—jolted THE SCRAPBOOK's memory.

In the early summer of 1968, when the Liberal Trudeau defeated his Progressive Conservative opponent Robert Stanfield, American television news, ever-sensitive to style over substance, presented the Canadian election to U.S. viewers as a contest between the older, considerably more experienced and dignified—and, of course, duller—Stanfield and the younger, more stylishly telegenic Trudeau.

One scene from the evening news earned an indelible entry in THE SCRAPBOOK's mental archives: a swim-suited Trudeau bouncing on a diving board and comically flopping into a pool, to the delighted squeals of supporters, followed by a quick, content-free interview. Asked to summarize his campaign for prime minister, Trudeau, still dripping from his splash in the pool, explained that his slogan would be "HIP"—that is, "Honesty in Politics"—followed by a knowing smirk.

It has been almost exactly 40 years since that exchange took place, but THE SCRAPBOOK still shudders at the horror of the HIP Canadian prime minister hypnotizing an American TV reporter by showing off like a HIP 12-year-old boy at poolside. And as Chetwynd explained last week, the subsequent 15 HIP years of Trudeaumania were to prove disastrous for Canada and Canada's place in the world, as well as for Canada's southern neighbor.

Robert Stanfield, by the way, who was known popularly as Honest Bob, survived Trudeau by a few years, and is today remembered as "the greatest prime minister Canada never had." ♦

Pop Quiz

Have a look at the picture here. Do you think it is (1) part of the latest missive from one of THE SCRAPBOOK's prison-inmate correspondents, further elucidating his theory on the tentacular reach of the Rothschilds into the sanctum sanctorum of the McCain campaign; (2) the remains of the classified documents from the National Archives that Sandy "Burglar" Berger stuffed into his ample trousers, took home, and later "cut into small pieces," in the words of federal investigators; or (3) the artistic stylings of Matt Gonzalez, former president of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, Green party candidate for mayor of San Francisco in 2003, and now Ralph Nader's running-mate.

Here's a hint: THE SCRAPBOOK can barely contain its excitement over the fifth Ralph Nader presidential campaign (if he lives to 90, he can still catch up to Harold Stassen's nine). Introducing his running mate last week, Nader said of Gonzalez: "He is a beautiful writer, he's an artist, he's a man for all seasons, and he's got a great political future." That sent us to Google, where we found 25 collages that the 42-year-old politician had displayed at the Lincart gallery in San Francisco (lincart.com/artists/album03). The one shown here, which is more than representative of his oeuvre, is titled "Kitchens & Theatres." We're still making inquiries on the Gonzalez literary front, but at this point, we're not taking Ralph Nader's word for anything. In fact, we can't say we have high hopes for either the beautiful writing or the great political future. ♦

Cue Violins for Ruby Dee

Too bad Ruby Dee didn't win an Oscar for her supporting role in *American Gangster*. We were really looking forward to the variety of euphemisms the press would come up with to explain away the repellent politics of the aging Stalinist battleaxe. *Newsweek*, in promoting her cause, artfully

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(Classic Steiner, reprinted from our issue of October 2, 2000)

referred to how "she and her husband of 57 years, the late Ossie Davis, never accepted the status quo, which is why they are revered as activists as much as thespians."

Still on our bookshelves, filed under "Red-baiting, Primary Sources," is the invaluable 1967 volume *A Symposium on the USSR: The First Fifty Years*, published by the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship. The first essay is headlined, no joke, "To the USSR with Love on Its Fiftieth Birthday." Ossie Davis's contribution—"A Black Man's Salute"—comes next. "It is natural," he wrote, "that today black men should salute that country and that people who fifty years ago turned their backs on the past and struck out boldly to build a wholly different kind of society. Just as it is natural for us to find in the example of the Russian people enduring solace for all of our struggles ahead." You read that right. The "status quo" Ruby Dee and Ossie Davis never accepted was one that resisted the worldwide triumph of the Bolshevik revolution. Activists, indeed. ♦

Feminism and the English Language

Responding to David Gelernter's article in last week's issue, "Feminism and the English Language," SCRAPBOOK pal and WEEKLY STANDARD contributing editor Joseph Bottum writes in defense of humankind—the word, that is, not all of humanity:

> David Gelernter's quixotic tilt at the abuse of our poor language is more than welcome. He's surely right that we must suffer through violation after violation of natural linguistic development, most of them the result of feminist ukases. (Though words like "synergistically" and "virtually" seem to walk the streets on their own motion, not needing feminist approval to lie down with anyone who has the cash.) Many of Gelernter's examples are telling—and yet, one wants to say a kind word for his poor, disfavored example of "humankind." The word has a slightly different connotative flavor from "mankind," and with its Cretic meter, bam-bah-bam, "humankind" spares English poets the difficult spondaic bam-bam that makes "mankind" such a mouthful. That is probably why T.S. Eliot—no feminist, he—took to it in "Burnt Norton": *Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind / Cannot bear very much reality.*

Bottum, the editor of *First Things*, will be delivering a lecture on March 17 at Georgetown University, "Living with the Dead: Why Cities Need Cemeteries and Nations Need Memorials." Respondents include Dana Gioia, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, and Roger Kimball, editor of the *New Criterion*. Full details can be found at the website of the Tocqueville Forum, government.georgetown.edu/tocquevilleforum. The SCRAPBOOK-reading portion of humankind will want to mark their calendars. ♦

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Casual

The Gift of Friendship

I once wrote a letter to my hero, hoping to get one back. This was early in 1976, and I'd recently taken my first newspaper job. William F. Buckley Jr., who was willing to challenge liberal orthodoxy and defend traditional norms like no one else, was as famous as I was obscure, and I could think of no good reason he would actually write back. He was, after all, the most prolific writer around, and he did his weekly *Firing Line* show and all the speeches, and then there was the skiing in Switzerland, the transatlantic sailing, and more.

But the busy Buckley—"Dictated in Switzerland, Transcribed in New York," it said atop the page—wrote back. He answered a question I'd asked him about Albert Jay Nock, ending with this: "By the way, I own the holograph of *Jefferson*," Nock's biography of Thomas Jefferson. That "by the way" sentence served to invite me into my hero's company: The two of us could discuss Nock and maybe other writers and ideas.

But it was the next sentence that bowled me over: "That was a splendid essay you did on C.S. Lewis." It had appeared eight months earlier in the old *Alternative*, soon to be renamed the *American Spectator*, and it was my first magazine piece ever. That Buckley could remember it at all astonished me. That he liked it was a huge encouragement to someone toiling in the newspaper equivalent of low-A ball.

What I didn't understand then was that my hero had an unusual gift for friendship. I began to see that two months later when I went to a lecture he gave at High Point College in North Carolina. Afterwards a large crowd gathered around him. I got just close enough to introduce myself. I thought that would be that. But Buckley greeted me as though we'd known each other for years and began walking me out, asking whether I'd like to get something to eat. The crowd parted before the two of us like the Red Sea.

Later that year the Democrats were to hold their convention in New York. I wrote Bill that I'd be up to cover it.

BETTMANN / CORBIS

He responded that since I hadn't said where I'd be staying, he'd try calling my newspaper to find out, as he wanted "to see if you can join us for dinner." The thought of Bill Buckley calling my paper to find out where I was staying in New York was amazing. But that was Bill. He'd go to such lengths. As it happened, I managed to reach him. And to make it to his home for dinner.

A year later I was in San Diego working for the morning newspaper. Bill was to lecture at a local college, and I wrote to say I was looking forward to the event. In reply, remembering that I'd told him I recognized his High Point speech as one previously published in the *Alternative*, he told me he might give that old speech and didn't want me to have to sit through it again. "If I see you in that front row, I shall cut either my throat or yours. Possibly yours, since otherwise"—flashing his characteristic wit—"I would not get my fee."

Bill invited me to drop by his hotel at 5:30 P.M. on the day of the speech. I watched him compose his column in maybe 20 minutes. Then we ordered from room service. It wasn't necessary to cut either throat, as I had to go back to work right before he was due to go speak. I left struck by the fact that he'd not thought about his speech in the two hours before he was to give it.

I think Bill's days somehow went longer than 24 hours. They had to, to accommodate his innumerable friendships. I remember the time I checked into a room in Norfolk late one night and heard a voice in the hall that could have belonged only to one man. Surely not, I thought, too coincidental. But stepping outside my door, I saw that the man entering his room with a huge bag in each hand was indeed Bill Buckley. It was too late for a visit. But Bill invited me in and dialed up room service.

The times I saw Bill were infrequent. But he overcame distance with notes and letters. Many of his friends—and they ran across the political spectrum—knew him as I did from afar, through the mail. And in my case, and doubtless others, he often had something generous to say. Once he observed that a review I'd written of one of his collections was "simply the best" he had ever received. I like to think he wasn't joking.

Bill's legacy is found all over politics and the media today. But he was critically important for those of us who came up in the fevered sixties and then had to endure the seventies, for he helped us make our way athwart history to the better time of the Reagan years. For us, he'll always remain a hero, and for many, too, he'll remain in memory an abiding friend.

Terry Eastland

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Border Insecurity

Canadian readers of The Weekly Standard—and there are many—look to your magazine for fresh and factual analysis. Olivier Guitta's "The Canadian Peril" (February 11) falls short on both counts.

Canada, probably more than any U.S. ally, responded to the events and the threats of 9/11. Since then, Canada has invested many billions of dollars in security and intelligence. Cooperation between law enforcement authorities is exceptional—across the entire 5,500 mile border. No attacks have been perpetrated in either country since 9/11. Persons have been arrested in both countries and charged with planning attacks. Based on the record, any objective observer would conclude that cooperative systems put in place since 9/11 work well.

Guitta didn't "fact check." He cites Homeland Security to the effect that 1,517 individuals were stopped at "the border" from October to December last year, falsely claiming U.S. citizenship. However, as the *Washington Post* reported on January 25 (citing DHS), only 20 of those cases were at the Canada-U.S. border. Only 210 false claims were made at the Canada-U.S. border over the past three years (30,850 were made at the U.S.-Mexico border).

So, at the United States' northern border 70 persons, on average, are stopped each year making false claims of U.S. citizenship (there are approximately 67 million entries from Canada into the U.S. per year). Again, systems seem to be working!

Guitta states that "immigration to Canada from terror-exporting regions is on the rise." What countries does he have in mind? Pakistan? Iran? Saudi Arabia? Later in his article, he identifies two: Algeria and Morocco. But immigration to the U.S. is greater than immigration to Canada from those five countries, according to 2006 statistics—the most recent year for which data is available. Furthermore, every legal immigrant to Canada is security screened before gaining entry. And we know who is gaining entry to our country (there is negligible illegal immigration to Canada).

Finally, it's sad that Guitta so uncritically bought speculations (fostered by a GAO "study") that someone could cross the border wearing a knapsack full of "radioactive contents." I hope U.S. authorities control radioactive material as closely as Canadian authorities do. My guess is that if Guitta were to try to obtain such material in Canada he'd be writing his next article from behind bars.

Roy Norton
Minister, Embassy of Canada
Washington, D.C.

Olivier Guitta responds: I quoted the U.S. Customs and Border Protection press release of January 22, 2008, announcing the stepped up controls on

the U.S.-Canadian border. As the press release focused solely on the northern border and nowhere mentioned the border with Mexico, I mistakenly assumed its report of "1,517 cases of individuals falsely claiming to be U.S. citizens" meant the Canadian border. A number of senators assumed the same and elicited from the DHS the clarification quoted by Roy Norton. I regret the error.

I'm not sure why a reporter should be faulted for conveying the findings of a U.S. Government Accountability Office (the investigative arm of Congress) report, based on testimony given before the Senate Finance Committee on September 27, 2007. Readers can judge for themselves by downloading the full report (www.gao.gov/new.items/d07884t.pdf). The GAO's video, simulating the transport of radioactive material and other contraband across northern and southern U.S. borders at unmanned or unmonitored locations, can likewise be viewed at: www.gao.gov/media/video/gao-07-884t/.

Woman of Letters

Last week, I spent two full hours just trying to convince my college freshman composition students that use of "he or she" to refer to "one" (or "student" or "person" or "individual") degrades logic and weakens language. Tired and not convinced of my success, I pulled The Weekly Standard from my mailbox and there found David Gelernter's genuinely eloquent article ("Feminism and the English Language," March 3) in which he makes a similar effort.

I reveled in Gelernter's references to E.B. White and William Strunk and nodded at his examples of "firefighter" not "fireman"—never "authoress" but, rather, "author." I did *not* chuckle. The logical abuses generated as a result of the enslavement of English by feminism, once a matter of humorous aberration, have become another evil of political correctness.

I must also concur with Gelernter's closing remarks on "brotherhood." I'm a sister, but I don't believe "sisterhood" suffices for the fullness of "brotherhood"—never has, never will. And I don't find general use of "he" or "him" or "his" confusing or insulting or gender-tainted. Thank you David Gelernter!

Elaine Kromhout
Ft. Pierce, Fla.

Clarification

In Stephen F. Hayes's article "*New York Times* vs. John McCain" (March 3), the author refers to "*Time* magazine's Blake Dvorak." Blake Dvorak blogs for Real Clear Politics, which is hosted by Time.com, but is not an employee of *Time* magazine.

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Fair Weather Free Trader

A few weeks back, the *Washington Post* wrote that Democratic frontrunner Barack Obama is running on a "platform of hope and change." Which is true enough—if by "hope and change" the *Post* actually means "despair and a change for the worse." That is certainly the case, anyway, when it comes to Obama's recent arguments against the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and free trade more generally.

Campaigning in Wisconsin, Ohio, and Texas, Obama touted his opposition to NAFTA and pledged to "renegotiate" the 1993 treaty between the United States, Mexico, and Canada that established the largest trading bloc in the world. It was, of course, a president from Obama's party, Bill Clinton, who signed NAFTA into law over opposition from trade unions and protectionists in the Democratic Congress. But that was then. During last week's Democratic presidential debate, Obama went so far as to say that, as president, he would use "the hammer" of a "potential opt-out" to "ensure that we actually get labor and environmental standards that are enforced." His opponent, Hillary Clinton, agreed completely. One of her husband's signal achievements is now just a bag of sand to jettison from her deflating balloon.

Obama claims that NAFTA was "oversold" and vows to 'stand firm' against similar agreements. The American worker deserves nothing less, we are told. But the American worker actually deserves a great deal more: He deserves a forthright explanation of the tangible benefits of free trade.

Obama claims that NAFTA was "oversold" and vows to "stand firm" against similar agreements that "undermine our economic security." The American worker deserves nothing less, we are told. But the American worker actually deserves a great deal more: He deserves a forthright explanation of the tangible benefits of free trade. Even Senator Change-We-Can-Believe-In knows these benefits are real. Obama has explained in the past that it is "not realistic to expect to renegotiate NAFTA" and that Americans "benefit enormously from exports and so . . . have an interest in free trade that allows us to move our products overseas." In a John Kerry-like straddle, he acknowledged in 2005 that a trade deal modeled on NAFTA—the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA)—was "probably a net plus for the U.S. economy" . . . before voting against it.

That vote may be seen as the beginning of his turn toward protectionism. The way Obama tells it, however, he has borne witness to the chaos wrought by free trade for some time—a quarter century, in fact. "When I first moved to Chicago in the early '80s," he said last week, "I saw steelworkers who had been laid off of their plants," painful evidence that the "net costs of many of these trade agreements, if they're not properly structured, can be devastating." What trade agreements Obama blames for 1980s deindustrialization, he did not say; NAFTA was far off in the future when he showed up on the South Side. And President Reagan had in fact imposed steel tariffs to protect U.S. makers. Productivity gains resulting from improved technology were, however, allowing fewer workers to produce more steel.

More likely, once the son-of-a-millworker dropped out of the Democratic contest, the friend-of-the-steelworkers saw an opening and seized it.

And so it was that Barack Obama—Columbia '83, Harvard Law '91—became a populist. His rhetoric is increasingly heated. In a "major economic address" in Janesville, Wisconsin, on February 13, Obama said that "decades of trade deals like NAFTA" included "protections for corporations and their profits," but none for "our workers," who have "seen factories shut their doors and millions of jobs disappear." In Youngstown, Ohio, on February 18, Obama said "NAFTA didn't put food

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on the table." On February 24, in Lorain, Ohio, he said "one million jobs have been lost because of NAFTA, including nearly 50,000 jobs" in the Buckeye State.

That "one million jobs" figure should not be overlooked. It has become Obama's mantra. It is, upon close inspection, the most specific piece of evidence to which he can point when he claims that NAFTA has been "devastating." And it is almost certainly bunkum.

The figure comes from the folks at the left-wing Economic Policy Institute. In a 2006 "briefing paper" entitled "Revisiting NAFTA: Still Not Working for North America's Workers," the institute's director of international programs, economist Robert Scott, wrote that "growing trade deficits with Mexico and Canada have displaced production" that *would have* supported "1.0 million (total) U.S. jobs since the agreement took effect in 1994." The jobs number is a hypothetical, in other words. And a silly one at that. Scott assumed that the trade deficit between the United States, Canada, and Mexico would have remained frozen at 1993 levels had it not been for NAFTA. In Scott's view NAFTA is solely responsible for the trade deficit between the three countries. And the trade deficit has been solely responsible for job loss. Nothing else has mattered.

Economists call this a "partial equilibrium" analysis. By assuming that everything else stays the same except for imports, you can plug numbers into U.S. Commerce Department models and see how many jobs those imports—had they been produced in domestic factories—might have sustained. Whatever its uses as an analytical tool, however, it is not a good picture of the real economy. Most economists agree that other factors—the business cycle, productivity gains, monetary policy—affect unemployment much more than trade. And most economists point to several other studies that show NAFTA contributing small but real job gains to the United States.

Even if Obama were right about the "one million jobs lost," he would still be distorting reality; that number is trivial in comparison with the number of jobs gained in the years since NAFTA's implementation. Today there are roughly 150 million Americans in the workforce; 146 million of them are employed. Approximately 26 million of those jobs were created after Clinton signed NAFTA. This is an enviable achievement. By almost any measure, the economies of the United States, Canada, and Mexico have improved since they agreed to NAFTA. The U.S. economy has grown by more than 50 percent. Productivity has increased. The manufacturing sector has lost jobs, but it is producing more goods than it was in 1993. And while consumer prices have been rising in recent months, the average annual inflation rate is down from where it was in 1993. So is the unemployment rate. Of course it would be wrong to credit NAFTA for all this good news. Just as it is wrong to assign blame to NAFTA for all of our economic woes.

There are roughly 146 million Americans employed. Approximately 26 million of them work in jobs created after NAFTA. This is an enviable achievement. By almost any measure, the economies of the United States, Canada, and Mexico have improved since they agreed to NAFTA.

There are many ways to measure the success of trade agreements. You can look at employment numbers, measure growth in the gross domestic product, or investigate whether a particular agreement increased comity between nations. NAFTA looks good by all these measures. Prior to NAFTA Mexico was a political and economic basketcase. It had widespread political instability and a history of nationalizing industries. Today, in nominal terms, Mexico's GDP is about twice what it was when NAFTA came into being. Mexico's inflation rate is lower than our own. The (still high) poverty rate has fallen. Mexico was spared the worst effects of the 1998 international monetary crisis. Mexicans have broken the PRI's stranglehold on political power and elected two pro-American reformers to the presidency. Democrats like Obama say they want to emphasize America's influence via "soft power" rather than the projection of military force. Is there a surer way to improve our ideological and cultural appeal than through free trade with our neighbors?

All is not well with the global or the U.S. economy—it never is. The subprime mortgage collapse and global credit contraction continue. The skills revolution that has made a graduate degree more important than union membership has increased inequality. Rising health care costs have eaten up wage gains. The presidential candidates of both parties need to deal with what one writer has called "the growing insecurities of the American worker." That writer goes on to say that unless we find "strategies to allay those fears" and send "a strong signal to American workers that the federal government" is "on their side," then "protectionist sentiment would only grow."

Barack Obama was correct in his assessment when he wrote those words in 2005. Mangling the facts, playing off peoples' anxieties, and exploiting fear of foreigners do not lessen protectionist sentiment. And they do not make the American economy any stronger.

—Matthew Continetti, for the Editors

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Who really pays when Congress taxes oil companies?

When Congress increases taxes on oil and natural gas companies, it's taxing Americans' economic futures

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Congress should reject new energy taxes

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William F. Buckley Jr.

1925-2008

CORBIS

We Are All in His Debt

BY WILLIAM KRISTOL

Here's one measure of the man and the scope of his achievement: No serious historian will be able to write about 20th-century America without discussing Bill Buckley. Before Buckley, there was no conservative movement. After Buckley, there was Ronald Reagan. Reagan was the most important American political figure of the latter half of the 20th century. No one was more central to his emergence and success than Bill Buckley.

It was not just a happy coincidence that Buckley, in the course of promoting conservatism, also helped his country. It's true that he saw in conservatism a set of doctrines that transcended any one nation, or any one time, and that approached the status of political, even metaphysical, truths. But Buckley wasn't embarrassed to view his conservatism as being in the service of his patriotism, and to see in the conservative movement a means of defending our country and of defending freedom. Indeed, because of the debilities of postwar liberalism, conservatism had to take as its task

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the defense of Western civilization itself.And so it did.

A few years ago, Charles Kesler called attention in these pages to Buckley's explanation of the "basic assumption" behind his bestselling Blackford Oakes spy novels:

> that the survival of everything we cherish depends on the survival of the culture of liberty; and that this hangs on our willingness to defend this extraordinary country of ours, so awfully mixed up, so much of the time; so schizophrenic in its understanding of itself and its purposes; so crazily indulgent of its legion of wildly ungovernable miscreants—to defend it at all costs. With it all, this idealistic republic is the finest bloom of nationhood in all recorded time, and save only that God may decide that the land of the free and the home of the brave has outrun its license on history, we Americans must contend, struggle, and if necessary fight for America's survival.

And so Buckley himself fought.

Many of the tributes have emphasized his charm and civility, his generosity and decency—all qualities he had in spades. But Buckley was also a fighter. From the beginning, he wasn't deterred by the extraordinary odds against him. Early on, he beat back crude attempts to delegitimize his efforts. And after he had established enough of a beachhead that frontal assaults against conservatism couldn't succeed, he parried subsequent efforts to weaken his forces or blunt their effect. Buckley fought through to victor y—to as great a victory as was possible.

He preferred to use his rapier-like wit, but he could pull out the heavy artillery when he needed to. In a letter to Willmoore Kendall, the philosopher Leo Strauss once referred admiringly to Buckley's "great power of invective." Buckley, in one column, could combine captivating charm with ferocious polemic—and this combination was a source of his lasting appeal to the young.

As a conservative, Buckley had a proper reverence for the greats of old. His obituaries and eulogies are among his best writings—able at once to convey grief and gratitude. But Buckley's was a world for young men and women, a world of challenge and daring and excitement. And he was extraordinarily kind and helpful to the young—including to those who were by no means his followers or even reliable allies.

More broadly, Buckley was notable for a generosity of spirit and an intellectual ecumenism. He welcomed many kinds of conservatives, old and new, into the fold at *National Review*, and he welcomed the emergence of other conservative organs and institutions (including this magazine). He knew that different kinds of conservatism could possess different elements of truth—and he would even acknowledge that liberalism might occasionally glimpse certain aspects of the just or the good. He didn't ever relax his standards of critical judgment, but he recognized the limits of any one person's or group's judgment. This combination of principle and ecumenism was key to his own intellectual vitality, and to the health of the conservatism he fathered.

As for Buckley the man: He lived life more fully than anyone I have known, with more joy, verve, and spirit. In watching over Buckley's 82 years on this terrestrial orb, surely the morning stars sang together for joy. ♦

A Man of Incessant Labor

BY CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

"At his desk," wrote Christopher Buckley in his email to friends, "in Stamford this morning." Well, one had somehow known that it would have to be at his desk. The late William F. Buckley Jr. was a man of incessant labor and productivity, with a slight allowance made for that saving capacity for making it appear easy. But he was driven, all right, and restless, and never allowed himself much ease on his own account. There was never a moment, after taping some session at *Firing Line*, where mere recourse to some local joint was in prospect. He was always just about to be late for the next plane, or column, or speech, or debate. Except that he never was late, until last Wednesday.

Ahh, *Firing Line*! If I leave a TV studio these days with what Diderot termed *l'esprit de l'escalier*, I don't always blame myself. If I wish that I had remembered to make a telling point, or wish that I had phrased something better than I actually did, it's very often because a "break" was just coming up, or the "segment" had been shortened at the last minute, or because the host was obnoxious, or because the panel had been over-booked in case of cancellations but at the last minute every egomaniac invited had managed to say "yes" and make himself available. But on Buckley's imperishable show, if you failed to make your best case it was your own damn fault. Once the signature

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On the 'Steve Allen Show,' November 1963

Bach chords had died away, and once he'd opened with that curiously seductive intro ("I should like to begin . . . "), you were given every opportunity to develop and pursue your argument. And if you misspoke or said anything fatuous, it was unlikely to escape comment. In my leftist days, if I knew I was going on the box with Buckley, I would make sure to do some homework (and attempt to emulate him by trying to make sure it didn't show).

He was in so many ways the man to beat. Facing him, one confronted somebody who had striven to take the "cold" out of the phrase "Cold War"; who had backed Joseph McCarthy, praised General Franco, opposed the Civil Rights Act, advocated rather than merely supported the intervention in Vietnam, and seemed meanwhile to embody a character hovering somewhere between Skull-and-Bones and his former CIA boss Howard Hunt. On the other hand, this was the same man who had picked an open fight with the John Birch Society, taken on the fringe anti-Semites and weirdo isolationists of the old Right, and helped to condition the Republican comeback of 1980. Was he really, as he had once claimed, yelling "stop" at the locomotive of history, or was he a closet "progressive"?

The Roman Catholicism that was always so central might seem to have offered a clue here, but this element also dissolved into ambiguities and approximations. "Faith" surely helped explain his solidarity with the Sovietized "captive nations" like Poland and Hungary and Latvia and Croatia, and even his sympathy for McCarthy and for the Diem family regime in Saigon (the last two allegiances being among the few that he shared with the Kennedy family). Yet it was in the liberal Catholic journal *Commonweal* that he also declared in 1952 that he was in favor of "Big Government for the duration" of the struggle against communism, and in favor of this, moreover, even if it meant Democratic party stewardship. There were times when *National Review* seemed almost to be published by some legate of the Spellman archdiocese (one of James Burnham's successors as chief Cold War columnist, I remember, was actually *named* Crozier). But then, you never knew when you might be surprised. Buckley once teamed up with Clare Booth Luce to opine that dogmatic opposition to contraception ran the risk of discrediting moral abhorrence of abortion.

Scott Fitzgerald's old observation, about the need to be able to manage contradiction within oneself, is obviously germane here. One of the most startling discoveries to be made—it occurs in John Judis's excellent early biography of Buckley—is that Whittaker Chambers himself beseeched Buckley to have nothing to do with Senator McCarthy. In spite of such advice, and from such a source, Buckley went ahead and published *McCarthy and His Enemies*, a book that by no means erred on the critical side.

To take another example from a quite different point of the compass, Buckley was willing to be immensely friendly with figures from the gay Right, like the doomed congressman Bob Bauman of Maryland or the flamboyant Marvin Liebman, but nonetheless wrote a column in the early 1980s saying that promiscuous homosexuals with AIDS should be tattooed on the buttocks as a sort of health-warning. There was too much detail in that proposal, and it showed how hard it can be to reconcile conservatism—one of his self-definitions—with libertarianism (one of his alternate ones).

In devotional matters he could oscillate as well: He justified an interview with *Playboy* in 1970 by saying dryly that he wanted to be able to communicate with his son, but devoted a passage of one of his many books on sailing to the revelation that doctrinal and baptismal disputes might perforce keep him from seeing his own grandchildren.

Buckley's vivid and energetic career (try reading his memoir *Overdrive* without experiencing vertigo) may be read as a registry or working-out of precisely this sort of

DON CRAVENS / TIME & LIFE PICTURES / GETTY

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tension. And, I would add, an honest working-out. I think I was once privileged to see the process in action.

Some years ago, Peter Robinson invited us both to be guests on his show *Uncommon Knowledge*, which had been tipped as a sort of successor to *Firing Line*. The subject was a retrospective of "The Sixties," and the question to each of us was: What did we most regret about the positions we had held then? I won't bore you with my answers. Buckley said that he now wished that the United States had never become involved in Vietnam to begin with, and added that he would still oppose the passage of the Civil Rights Act but not in the same terms or for the same reasons as he had then. (His updated view was that the legislation had caused more trouble than it was worth—"like the Civil War.")

In the Manhattan offices of 'National Review,' 1980

FRED R. CONRAD / NEW YORK TIMES / REDUX

At the time I was a little stunned by both admissions, but I can also see how they make sincere self-critical sense. Vietnam was too much of that "big government" that he had reluctantly accepted, and state-enforced civil rights took too little account of the libertarian principles that were dear to him. In a sort of coda to the sixties, it was *National Review* that published the first major symposium calling for the decriminalization of at least the "softer" narcotics.

Buckley's return to a version of rightist isolationism in the matter of Iraq in the last few years can be fairly easily analyzed in the same terms, of profound skepticism if not indeed pessimism about large state-sponsored or state-sponsoring schemes. (I recall teasing him about his famous 1968 debate with Gore Vidal, and pointing out that this angry joust was actually between two former young enthusiasts for Charles Lindbergh and "America First." The irony here is also at Vidal's expense.) Bill's gift for friendship with some liberals—John Kenneth Galbraith most notably—was the counterpart of his challenge to their monopoly on the word "intellectual."

His slightly affected distaste for modernity did not inhibit him from becoming an early star in the meretricious world of television. Having inaugurated his show in 1966, and eventually wondering how to wind it up, he closed it in 1999 thus giving it the magic lifetime (or so I suspect) of what the old hymn calls "three-and-thirty years." And he decided to go out in a blaze of tedium, with a debate on the campus of "Ole Miss" at Oxford, on the propriety or otherwise of taxing Internet commerce! I was honored to be invited and, as always, stayed up the night before to do my homework. William F. Buckley Jr. was never solemn except or unless on purpose, and seldom if ever flippant where witty would do, and in saying this I hope I pay him the just tribute that is due to a serious man. ♦

Christopher Hitchens is a columnist for Vanity Fair *and the author, most recently, of* Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*: A Biography.

On the 'Firing Line'

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

I came to him when I was still a teenager, through television. You might be surprised at how many people found him this way. He published millions of words of commentary and rumination, on a startling range of subjects, in high-circulation newspapers and the slickest magazines. He pulled off a dozen widely publicized stunts—running for mayor of New York, deep-sea diving to the remains of the *Titanic*, playing Bach with the

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At a press conference of the Conservative party, New York, 1968

JOHN SOTOMAYOR / NEW YORK TIMES / REDUX

Phoenix Symphony Orchestra. Over a span of 30 years he let loose a stream of novels, many of them bestsellers. Yet what really made him famous—what made him the butt of impersonators like David Frye and Robin Williams, set him up for the cover of *Time* and the bold-face celebrity treatment in the gossip columns—was a TV show.

Firing Line debuted in 1966, when all that America's TV-starved youth had to choose from were the three networks, maybe a local station or two, and an outlet for what was still called "educational television." By the time of *Firing Line*'s final episode, in 1999, the whiskers were showing. The original running time of one hour had been reduced by half. As viewership fell and "pick-up"—the number of local PBS stations that aired the show—declined, producers tried a number of gimmicks to freshen it up and revive interest, without much success. Various interlocutors, among them the TV journalist Jeff Greenfield and the leftwing politician Mark Green, were brought in, to serve as quasi-hosts. For a time, the pundit Michael Kinsley anchored the show and reduced Buckley to the role of mere interviewer. When your liveliest gimmick involves Michael Kinsley, the end is near.

The show by then was an anachronism, both in its format and its ambition. *Firing Line* was a creature of the middlebrow—that long-gone impulse of the mid-20th century popular culture that tried to orient a mass audience toward learning, intellectual sophistication, and cultural uplift. The airwaves were filled with middlebrow fare, in between showings of *Leave it to Beaver* and *The $64,000 Question*. A lot of middlebrow stuff was dopey—try, if you dare, to watch such earnest, humorless teleplays as *12 Angry Men* all the way through. Some of it proved provocative in conception and deadly in execution—the TV host David Susskind once had a weekly show called *Open End*, in which he would convene a panel of guests and engage them in conversation for several hours, with no set time limit, till everyone got bored and stopped talking.

But a lot of the middlebrow was wonderful, reflecting a high, if implausible, opinion of the public's taste and aspirations. Leonard Bernstein's *Young People's Concerts* were one example and *Firing Line* was another. Buckley's original format was stripped bare: two chairs, a table, Buckley himself, with his clipboard and pen, and a guest, who would carry on a conversation for the full hour, at (in retrospect) an almost unimaginable level of cleverness. Unavoidably, there was punditry and commentary on the crises of the day—Vietnam, Czechoslovakia, Afghanistan, Watergate, Jimmy Carter—but Buckley and *Firing Line* also brought us Rebecca West talking about the nature of treason, Stephen Spender on poetry, Eudora Welty on southern literature, Kingsley Amis on humor, Fulton Sheen on Augustine, and Gunnar Myrdal and Malcolm Muggeridge and B. F. Skinner and Walker Percy . . . for an hour at a time, without commercials.

A particular favorite was Mortimer Adler, the freelance philosopher and Great Books maven, himself the purest embodiment of the middlebrow impulse of the fifties and sixties. When Buckley published a book of *Firing Line* transcripts in 1989, he closed its 500 pages with Adler discoursing on the traditional proofs of God's existence. Imagine Bill O'Reilly sitting across from Mortimer Adler:

> WFB: You take us into the uniqueness of the word "God," and I wonder whether in that particular section of your book you might be accused of a formal subjectivity.
>
> ADLER: I think not. Here I am most greatly indebted to that marvelous eleventh-century archbishop of Canterbury, St. Anselm. Anselm said, If you're going to think about God, your mind obliges you to think about a being than which no greater can be thought of. That's binding on the mind.
>
> WFB: The ontological argument?

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ADLER: No, we're not here arguing for God's existence. This is an argument about what you must think when you think about God . . .

I suppose quotes like that might be misleading. *Firing Line* wasn't a graduate seminar or a ladies' tea. The show was conceived, and rose to its greatest popularity, at a time when conservatives of any kind were an oddity in all broadcast media beyond the Sunday morning sermonette. Buckley delighted in his uniqueness and capitalized on it. In the early days of the show, his friend Alistair Cooke wrote, "He seemed to be setting himself up each time as a prosecutor more than a moderator. . . . In his role as gadfly of the liberals, he often, even in introducing them, put them on the defensive from the start." For that reason many prominent pols, most famously Robert Kennedy, refused invitations to appear. Buckley himself admitted that the show on many occasions was a "bare-knuckled intellectual brawl."

Nowadays, by contrast, the favorite cliché that critics and admirers alike use for cable talk shows is "an intellectual foodfight." Forgive me if I press the point too far, but the contrast in metaphors is telling. Foodfights are pointlessly messy and no one gets hurt; in a bare-knuckled brawl the stakes are higher. One is manly, the other is mostly for show.

'A prosecutor more than a moderator': 'Firing Line,' September 1979

ROGER RESSMEYER / CORBIS

The old etiquette says we are not to speak ill of the dead. But pondering the dead sometimes invites us to speak ill of the living, or at least compare the living unfavorably to their predecessors, and this is irresistible when it comes to Buckley in his capacity as TV star. He flourished in an era before someone decided that what TV news shows really needed was . . . sound effects. *Firing Line* only reminds us how impoverished television talk has become now that there's so much of it. The trajectory of the popular intellect in America can be traced quite explicitly from *Firing Line* down to *Hardball* and Keith Olbermann. For that matter, the aspirations of American conservatism can be traced quite vividly in the downward arc from Bill Buckley to . . . take your pick.

The kind of wonderful talk that *Firing Line* specialized in requires a particular kind of wisdom and self-restraint. For the talk to be good, you have to know when to stop talking—to know when some things aren't worth saying, and that if something can't be said well it may be best left unsaid. Buckley elevated the medium of television by knowing its limitations. This hit me strongly when, through a fluke, I attended the taping of the last episode of *Firing Line*. The setting was unglamorous, in a shabby studio in the bowels of an office building in lower Manhattan, but for someone who had watched the show as a teenager, mystified and entranced by all these chatty and charming and sometimes angry, sometimes funny people, it was a bittersweet privilege to witness the thing being wrapped up for good.

Buckley's final guests were a collection of youngerish journalists and pols from the generation following his own. Buckley got off several nice lines—"Tell me, Mark," he said to Green, "you've been on the show nearly 100 times. Have you learned anything yet?"—but the moment I remember most vividly came after Ted Koppel arrived with an entourage from ABC. Koppel commandeered the set and subjected Buckley to a valedictory interview. The conversation wandered and after several minutes limped to its close.

"Mr. Buckley," Koppel said, "we have 10 seconds left. Could you sum up in 10 seconds?"

"No," Buckley said. ♦

Andrew Ferguson is a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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A Christian Gentleman

BY JOSEPH BOTTUM

In photographs from those days, the young William F. Buckley Jr. of the 1950s always seemed to have his legs stretched out—his feet up on a nearby chair, or a pile of books, or an open desk drawer. Slumped down, the phone squeezed to his ear by his shoulder, his fingers twiddling a pencil, he looked both involved and distant, caught up in the moment and a little bit removed, self-absorbed, and self-ironic: a 30-year-old man with a fairly clear idea of what his talent was worth and what it wasn't. He always seemed to be doing what he did and something more besides.

Perhaps that *more* is the key for understanding the man, who died last week at the age of 82. Obituary after obituary spoke of the tools he had used to help create the modern conservative movement: his compelling voice, his eloquent speeches, his good looks, his family wealth. As it happens, his voice wasn't really resonant; he talked through his teeth too much, the words all formed in the front of his mouth and pushed out by an act of will. For that matter, he wasn't classically eloquent; he often phrased things to draw attention to his phrasings, and from the beginning of his career to the end he fancied long words solely for the sake of his fancy. He wasn't even handsome, in truth: his grin lopsided, his eyes too small and too sleepy, his face somehow seeming to be wrapped further around his skull than it needed to be.

The money was real enough, and his wife Patricia's money (from a Vancouver lumber and mining fortune) was even realer. In 1955, his father could afford to give him $100,000—about $750,000 in today's money—to help start *National Review*, but even there the family wealth was less than a truly great fortune. The Buckleys were not the Rockefellers; they were just very rich people who had passed beyond the need to work for their bread, and the money mostly existed in William F. Buckley's life as yet another instrument by which he lived always in some way *more*.

What he did, in effect, was roll together his odd elocution, his elaborate vocabulary, his interesting looks, and his patrician background to create one of the great acts on the 20th-century American public stage. Look, for instance, at the photographs and film clips of the improvisational theater that was his 1965 race for mayor of New York—the campaign he entered when, after the Conservative party he had helped found offered him the nomination, he said, "I looked at it and thought, *What the hell, this is kind of interesting*."

During the race, he proved wittier and more fascinating, more of a genuine figure, than anyone in New York politics since Fiorello LaGuardia a generation before, and he seemed to fill the room during the campaign's televised debates: larger, cleverer, and sharper than his opponents could ever be. Oh, certainly, he was defeated without much difficulty; the New York audience didn't actually vote for him—but they did love watching him, and John Lindsay's chances of national success as a liberal Republican died in that campaign, eviscerated by Buckley's cool conservative critique.

Even his later account, *The Unmaking of a Mayor*—by far his best book—doesn't explain fully why he entered the race in 1965. In the end, the cause may have been nothing other than his constant desire to do something more. At the time, Buckley was 40 years old and *National Review* had been up and running for 10 years. With the wipeout of Barry Goldwater the previous fall, and Ronald Reagan's election as governor of California still over a year in the future, the way forward for the movement he was shepherding was not obvious. He seemed to want some new project to add to his already overfull life. His performance during the campaign was a revelation, and it set up his next great performance, as the host of the televised interview program *Firing Line*, which began in 1966. He wasn't always cool and collected. In a famous exchange on national television in 1968, he threatened to sock Gore Vidal in the face—"and you'll stay plastered"—for calling him a crypto-Nazi. But the effect of Buckley's star power was to give a cool look to conservatism and form the modern image of an intellectual movement.

His role as the great impresario of American conservatism has been well celebrated in his obituaries and the long tour of honors and farewell dinners with which he marked his final years. His role as the gatekeeper, too: banishing the John Birchers and the followers of Ayn Rand to the political fringe, and rooting out the remnants of a European-style anti-Semitic conservatism. (His long essay in *National Review* in 1991, "In Search of Anti-Semitism," remains his definitive statement.)

Along the way, many have remarked on his multiple lives. He had a rich man's existence, with the skiing in Switzerland and the sailing on the Atlantic and the parties on Park Avenue and the chauffeur-driven car into Manhattan from the estate in Connecticut. And then he had his writing life, creating the series of spy-thriller novels that began in 1976 with *Saving the Queen* and penning books about food and boating and his brief but depressing time at the United Nations. All the while, he had his pundit's career, writing three newspa-

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per columns a week and taping his television show and editing *National Review* and giving 70 lectures a year and plotting political adventures with the powers that be.

It's enough to fill three lifetimes, and yet, somehow, in the accounts of all this, his Christian devotion seems almost to have disappeared. This was yet another of the simultaneous lives that he led, another string to his bow, and there was a time in the 1950s and 1960s when Buckley was also seen as the nation's leading Catholic layman.

His parents' Catholicism formed their children more significantly than anything else, and the family's experience rescuing priests during the anti-clerical Mexican revolution helped define for Buckley and his siblings their vision of themselves as radically opposed to the modern pattern of the world. It seemed perfectly in character when, at a talk at Catholic University in 1971, his sister Patricia responded to a suggestion that the Virgin Mary should have aborted the infant Jesus by storming the stage and slapping the speaker.

Buckley himself was never a professional Catholic, in the sense of someone who made his living from the fact of his faith, and his standing as a Catholic commentator declined when in 1961 *National Review* responded to John XXIII's encyclical on Christianity and social progress, *Mater et Magistra*, with the quip: "Mater si, Magistra no." Still, it was always there in his life, even if, on *Firing Line*, he most often used Malcolm Muggeridge as the designated Christian commentator.

Buckley could joke about his faith: He said of the deathbed conversion to Catholicism of his friend Frank S. Meyer that "the only remaining intellectual obstacle to his conversion was the collectivist implication lurking in the formulation 'the communion of saints' in the Apostles' Creed." And he could be serious: In reply to Garry Wills's claim that "being Catholic always mattered more to him than being conservative," Buckley responded, "If he meant he has a higher loyalty to God than to civil society, then the answer is obvious: God has to be pre-eminent." But he never let it go, even in his final months, darkened by the death of his wife, Patricia, in April 2007.

In the 1950s, he made an attempt to purchase the Catholic magazine *Commonweal* (through the agency of the political theorist James Burnham, whose brother Philip had been editor of the magazine). Those were different days, of course, in the glow of a Catholic renaissance that ran from the philosophical work of Jacques Maritain to the fiction of Flannery O'Connor, and *Commonweal* was a significant intellectual publication. It would be fascinating to observe what, in

BETTMANN / CORBIS

Announcing his candidacy for mayor of New York City, June 1965

an alternate universe, William F. Buckley might have done as the editor of a Catholic intellectual journal instead of *National Review*.

Last week's obituaries—in the *New York Times*, for example, or the *Washington Post* and the *Los Angeles Times*—all reduced his Catholicism to nothing more than a species, or at best a cause, of his political conservatism. This diminishment of his religious mind to political activism marks a loss in our understanding of how an intellectual life is made and how a full life is lived.

Full certainly describes William F. Buckley's life. With everything he did, he was always doing something more; with everything he was, he was always being something more—leading some further life, accomplishing some further goal, learning some further skill. He found fame young, and he sought fame hard, giving $10,000 to the publisher of his first book, *God and Man at Yale*, to use for advertising. But he never was just that famous man, any more than he was just a well-known political pundit, or a television celebrity, or a rich man's heir. And it was, more than anything else, his faith that gave him the *more* that defined him: a place to stand outside himself, a power to laugh, and a higher life to live. ♦

Joseph Bottum is editor of First Things *and a contributing editor to* The Weekly Standard.

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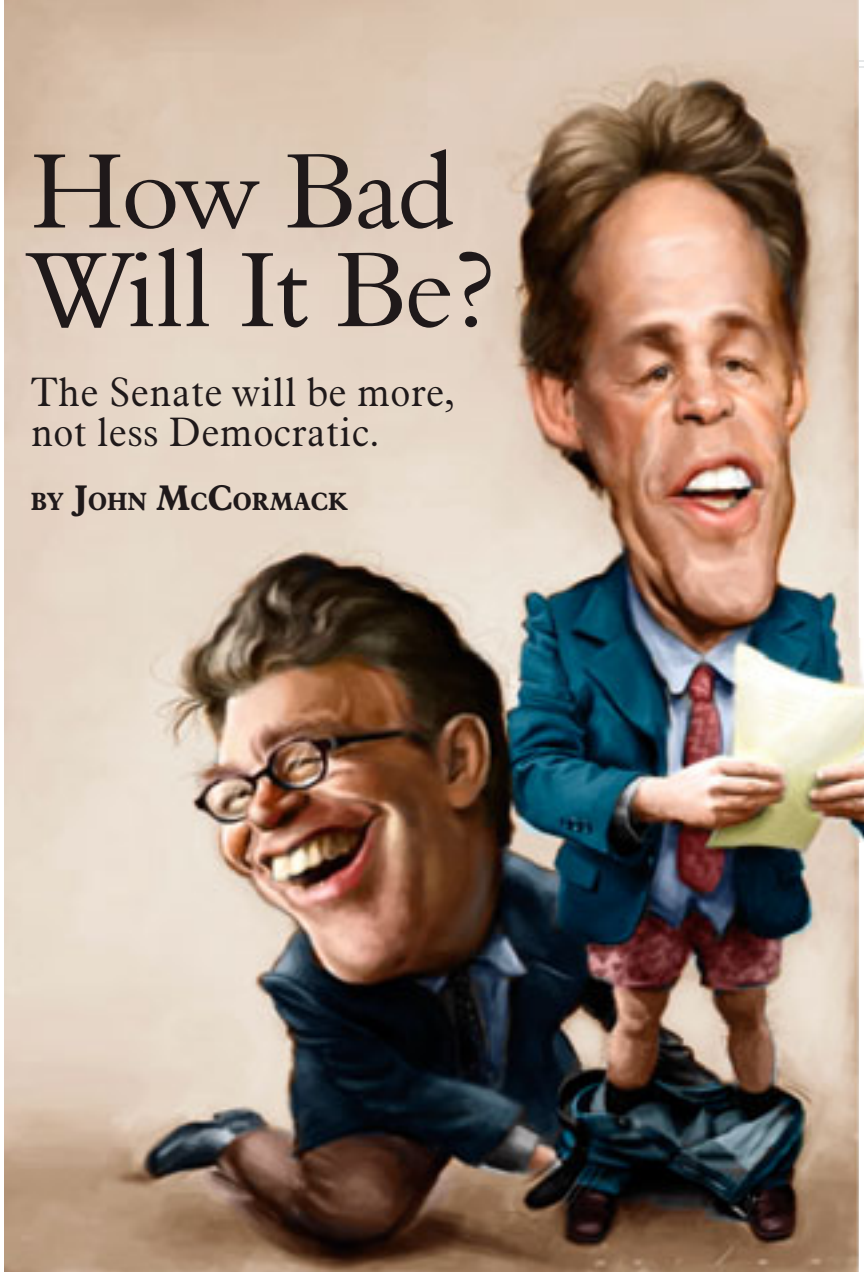
How Bad Will It Be?

The Senate will be more, not less Democratic.

BY JOHN MCCORMACK



JASON SEILER

Last summer, Senate Republicans seemed headed for a cliff in the 2008 election and likely to land on the wrong side of a 60-seat, filibuster-proof Democratic majority. Fights over immigration and Iraq had plunged Republican approval ratings to new lows, and a string of retirements left the GOP in danger of losing more than a dozen seats. Senator John Ensign, chairman of the Senate GOP's campaign arm, the National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC), says donors wouldn't so much as take his calls.

John McCormack, a Collegiate Network fellow, is an editorial assistant at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

But Republican prospects have "improved quite a bit," Ensign says, now that things are going better in Iraq. The number of competitive races has shrunk as Democrats failed to recruit blue-chip candidates in red states like Tennessee, North Carolina, Kansas, and Nebraska. NRSC executive director Scott Bensing says recruiting Republican candidates was "painstaking" a year ago, but now Republicans have strong candidates for a number of contested seats where John McCain's nomination should help win independents.

Even so, November's Senate races are an uphill battle. Republicans control 23 of the 35 seats up for election this year, and 9 of the 10 vulnerable seats are held by Republicans, mostly in blue states and states that are trending Democratic. The Republicans are also at a disadvantage on money: The Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee had $29 million in cash on hand at the end of 2007, to the Republicans' $12 million. "We're going to have a more Democratic Senate, we're just not sure how much more," says Larry Sabato of the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia. "It's possible that McCain has stabilized things enough for Republicans so that what might have been a disastrous year for the GOP may become a tolerably bad year."

Just how much the Democrats increase their ranks will matter a great deal. They now control the Senate 51 to 49. If they take 7 or 8 seats, they'll put a GOP majority out of reach for many election cycles. And, assuming they can pick off a few liberal Republican votes, they'll have the effectively filibuster-proof Senate needed to pass an Obama administration's legislative wish list.

So how go the races for the 10 Senate seats in play? Let's start with the 4 Democratic-leaning states with Republican incumbents: Minnesota and New Hampshire are toss ups, while Maine and Oregon look good for Republicans.

To win his second term, Minnesota's Norm Coleman will have to defeat trial lawyer Mike Ciresi or comedian and former Air America radio host Al Franken, who will contend for the Democratic nomination at the state party's convention in June. In a recent poll, Coleman was a couple points ahead of Ciresi and a few points behind Franken, but Republicans are salivating at the opportunity to run against Franken, author of *Rush Limbaugh Is a Big Fat Idiot*. Franken is not necessarily too liberal or eccentric for a state that has elected Paul Wellstone and pro-wrestler Jesse Ventura, but the NRSC's Bensing says Franken is a "nasty, sarcastic, mean person, and Norm Coleman's going to chew him up." Sabato is more cautious. "This

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is a state that could turn on a dime," he says, adding that "if McCain puts [Minnesota governor Tim] Pawlenty on the ticket, that could save Coleman" by boosting Republican turnout and attracting Independents.

New Hampshire's freshman senator John Sununu faces a tough rematch with former governor Jeanne Shaheen, whom he beat by 5 points in 2002. The polls, though favoring Shaheen, have been wildly volatile. The underlying fact is that the state is becoming more Democratic. Registered Republicans outnumbered registered Democrats by about 10 percentage points in 2002; that GOP edge has almost disappeared. Democrats took over both House seats and the state legislature in 2006. Yet Sununu is optimistic, insisting, "New Hampshire remains a state where limiting taxes and the size of government is very important."

Across the New Hampshire border, Maine's junior senator, Susan Collins, is being challenged by congressman Tom Allen. Although he is probably the strongest candidate Maine Democrats could have wished for, multiple polls have shown her ahead by more than 20 points. Both candidates have high name recognition, and Allen will probably need Collins to make a serious gaffe (think "macaca") for this race to become competitive.

Like Collins, Oregon senator Gordon Smith now opposes the Iraq war. He also enjoys double-digit leads over his prospective Democratic challengers, speaker of the Oregon house Jeff Merkley and political activist Steve Novick, who face off in a primary in May. Unlike Collins, Smith isn't polling above 50 percent, normally a warning sign for an incumbent. The Democratic nominee—both Merkley and Novick are relatively unknown—will receive a boost from the primary, but Democrats will be hampered by a third-party challenge from the left by former NEA chairman John Frohnmayer.

Then there are three open seats in states trending Democratic where Republicans are retiring: John Warner in Virginia, Pete Domenici in New Mexico, and Wayne Allard in Colorado.

If any Democrat besides former governor Mark Warner were on the ballot in Virginia, this race would be tighter, but as it stands Warner is leading former Republican governor Jim Gilmore by about 20 points in the polls. Beyond his own popularity, Mark Warner benefits from the recent shift toward Democrats in the Old Dominion. In 2007, Democrats proved that Jim Webb's 2006 upset of George Allen wasn't a fluke by winning control of the state senate, and this year Virginia will be a battleground state in the presidential election. Mark Warner will likely become the state's second Democratic senator.

> In a recent poll, Norm Coleman was a few points behind Al Franken in Minnesota, but Republicans are salivating at the opportunity to run against the comedian and author of 'Rush Limbaugh Is a Big Fat Idiot.'

All three of New Mexico's congressmen are fighting for the seat Domenici is vacating. Conservative Steve Pearce and moderate Heather Wilson face off in a June 3 Republican primary, but either candidate will have a tight race against Democrat Tom Udall in November. The most recent poll shows Udall leading Wilson by 7 points and Pearce by 8 points. The early lead taken by Udall, son of former congressman and interior secretary Stewart Udall, can be explained in part by high name recognition. In addition, Democrats outnumber Republicans 49 percent to 33 percent among registered voters statewide. In 2006, Udall won his own district by 55 points, while Pearce won his by 20 points, and Wilson only squeaked by. Still, with a popular southwestern GOP senator on the presidential ticket, it would be premature to count out Pearce or Wilson.

The race in Colorado pits Democratic congressman Mark Udall, Tom's cousin, against former Republican congressman Bob Schaffer. Polls have shown the two candidates neck-and-neck. Republicans enjoy a small advantage in registration, but the state has been electing Democrats like Senator Ken Salazar and Governor Bill Ritter in recent years. Schaffer says these victories are not a "trend but an anomaly." He points out that prior to their election neither Salazar nor Ritter—who ran as a pro-life Democrat—had a legislative voting record, while "Udall has more than 10 years of casting consistent Boulder-oriented votes." This could be the hardest-fought race in the country, with Democrats trying to expand their gains in the mountain west and holding their convention in Denver.

Last, there are three competitive races in red states: Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alaska.

When Trent Lott retired in December, congressman Roger Wicker was appointed to fill the seat. A pair of polls in December produced conflicting results: Wicker first leading well-known former governor Ronnie Musgrove by 8 points, then trailing him by 14 points. But Wicker is favored to win his special election in November riding on the coattails of John McCain. Bush won the state 59 percent to 40 percent in 2004.

In Louisiana, state treasurer John Kennedy has the best—and perhaps only—shot for a Republican takeover in his race against second-term Democrat Mary Landrieu. The state has tilted Republican in recent years, sending David Vitter to the Senate in 2004 and Bobby Jindal to the governor's mansion last fall. Kennedy himself is part of this Republican trend, having run against Vitter in 2004 as a Democrat and switched parties last year. While Landrieu's liberalism on abortion and judges puts her at odds with many Louisiana Democrats, eth-

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ics might be the biggest issue in the race. Landrieu has come under fire for earmarking over $2 million for a children's reading program called Voyager, allegedly in exchange for campaign contributions requested by her office. In November, Kennedy was leading by 7 points, but Landrieu was up by 4 points in early December; no polls have been taken since the *Washington Post* broke the Voyager story on December 20.

In Alaska, a bribery scandal may cost Republican Ted Stevens his seventh full term in the Senate. The FBI and IRS raided Stevens's home last July amidst allegations that Veco Corp., an oil pipeline services company, paid for $100,000 in renovations on the house. A grand jury continues to gather evidence, and an indictment would probably sink Stevens. A poll in December showed Anchorage mayor Mark Begich, the likely Democratic nominee, leading Stevens by 6 points. Stevens has already drawn one primary challenger, wealthy businessman and former state legislator David Cuddy, and according to Senator Ensign, the NRSC will not give Stevens any money for his primary campaign. This race looks competitive regardless of the Republican nominee—a surprising development in a state Bush carried by a greater margin than he did Texas.

As the presidential primary process has shown, elections are far from predictable, especially eight months out. Will Republican governor Mike Rounds jump into the South Dakota race and put another Democratic seat in play? It's not likely. Will John McCain retire from the Senate as he runs for president and open up another Republican seat to defend? He hasn't said. Will another round of war-funding fights in Congress hurt the Republicans or make the Democrats look out of touch with reality? That's not certain.

What is clear for the GOP is that, with progress in Iraq, John McCain at the top of the ticket, and a strong crop of candidates, Senate Republicans have taken a step back from the electoral abyss. But the specter of a 7-seat loss still looms. ♦

The Race Minefield

Yes, it will matter in the election.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

As Barack Obama strode to the podium after his triumphant victory in the South Carolina primary last month, the crowd gathered to hear him began to chant. "Race doesn't matter! Race doesn't matter!"

Their words echoed a theme often articulated by their candidate, and they seemed to be saying something rather profound about the meaning of Obama's candidacy. These supporters were reacting to the widespread perception that Bill and Hillary Clinton had attempted to use Obama's race to win their state. And that reality, ironically underscored by their chanting, leads us to the exact opposite conclusion about politics in America between now and November.

> Polling consistently shows overwhelming public support for race-neutral policies. And yet a long line of Republican politicians have shown a strange reluctance to embrace the issue. You can add John McCain to this list.

Race will matter.

In the speech that launched his meteoric rise in national politics, the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic National Convention, Barack Obama called for a politics of hope, denounced "those who are preparing to divide us," and offered a direct challenge. "I say to them tonight, there is not a liberal America and a conservative America—there is the United States of America. There is not a black America and a white America and Latino America and Asian America—there's the United States of America."

It was a moving speech, filled with hopeful sentiments. But two years later, Senator Barack Obama, with two years' experience in the Senate and his eye on a presidential run, taped a radio ad attacking the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative (MCRI), going out of his way to defend racial preference policies that by their very definition divide Americans into blacks, whites, Latinos, and Asians.

The original MCRI, relying heavily on the 1964 Civil Rights Act, read: "The state shall not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting." The language of Proposal 2, as it was identified on the ballot, was altered slightly to include the phrase "affirmative action." The effect was the same: Its passage would end the government's practice of categorizing and rewarding citizens on the basis of race.

Obama responded:

> This is Senator Barack Obama. And I'm asking you to vote no on

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GARY LOCKE

Proposal 2. We've made great strides in our society towards fairness and opportunity for all people. But whether we like to admit it or not, there's still barriers to women and minorities reaching their full potential. Proposal 2 may sound like a reasonable way to move towards a Michigan that is blind to differences in sex and race but don't be fooled by the reassuring rhetoric. If the initiative becomes law it would wipe out programs that help women and minorities get a good education and jobs. It would hurt initiatives that help women and minorities build their own businesses. And it would eliminate efforts to help our children enter fields such as science, engineering, and mathematics. Proposal 2 closes these doors to many in Michigan and it moves us further away from a country of full opportunity. Proposal 2 is wrong for Michigan and it's wrong for America.

Race-neutral policies are "wrong for America"? A measure that echoes the 1964 Civil Rights Act is just "reassuring rhetoric"? The same campaign that paid for Obama's ad ran an ad comparing the end of racial preferences to the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

"If you could have prevented 9/11 from ever happening, would you have?" the ad asked. "On November 7th there's a national disaster headed for Michigan, the elimination of affirmative action." Was this the new politics Obama had promised two years earlier? How does he square it with his claim in his stump speeches that "We can't afford the same politics of fear that invokes 9/11 as a way to scare up votes."

Americans have come to expect these kinds of contradictions from our politicians. But the chief rationale for Obama's candidacy is that he is different, that he will lead a post-partisan, post-ideological, and post-racial America. Not everyone believes it.

"Barack Obama is a far left guy who issues reassuring rhetoric but beneath it all is just like any other liberal," says Ward Connerly, the California businessman who backed the Michigan initiative after leading victorious efforts in California and Washington. It passed easily, and he is hoping to duplicate that success in five states this coming November: Arizona, Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska, and Oklahoma. Connerly, a Republican who supported Rudy Giuliani for president, hopes that McCain will support his initiatives and even run on them as a way to counter Obama's rhetoric. But he knows from experience not to count on it.

The politics of racial preferences are counterintuitive. Polling consistently shows overwhelming public support for race-neutral policies. A *Newsweek* poll from last July asked a straightforward question. "Do you think race should be allowed as a factor in making decisions about employment and education, or should race not be allowed as a factor?" Eighty-two percent of those surveyed said race should not be a factor, including 75 percent of nonwhites.

The numbers vary depending on how the question is posed—support for race-neutral policies drops marginally when voters are asked whether they favor "affirmative action"—but the conclusion remains the same. On this issue, the American public agrees with Barack Obama's words, not his policies.

And yet Republican politicians have shown a strange reluctance to embrace race neutrality. In 1996, Bob Dole refused for months to endorse California's Proposition 209,

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as Connerly's California Civil Rights Initiative was called, for fear that he would be seen as using racial preferences as a "wedge issue." (He finally endorsed it in the waning days of his campaign, which had exactly the effect he had sought to avoid.)

In 1997, Texas governor George W. Bush refused to back a Houston referendum based on the California proposition. In 1998, Florida governor Jeb Bush opposed Connerly's Florida initiative. In 2003, the Bush administration took a split-the-baby position on a Supreme Court case involving admissions policies at the University of Michigan. In 2006, Republican gubernatorial candidate Dick DeVos refused to back the Michigan Civil Rights Initiative, which won 58-42 in a down year for Republicans. (The self-funded DeVos lost to incumbent Governor Jennifer Granholm, a Democrat, 56-42.)

You can add John McCain to this list. In 1998, as McCain began planning for his presidential bid two years later, Arizona state senator Scott Bundgaard was pushing for a measure similar to Proposition 209. McCain, in a speech to Arizona Hispanic leaders, called such measures "divisive." He did not directly oppose Bundgaard's initiative, but news reports at the time claimed that McCain told others in the state legislature that he thought such a measure would be counterproductive. (That same year, McCain joined 14 other Republicans and 43 Democrats to vote in favor of a Department of Transportation set-aside requiring that 10 percent of highway contracts go to minority-owned businesses. Again, news reports suggested that McCain warned his colleagues about appearing divisive.)

By 2000, McCain's comments as a presidential candidate seemed to reflect a slight shift. In February, McCain told reporters aboard his campaign bus that he opposed racial preferences and quotas. When they asked why he voted for race-conscious programs in the Senate, he told them that he did not want to eliminate the old programs until new programs based on economic need had been implemented to replace them.

But it was what he said before articulating that position that was more revealing. An account in the *Orange County Register* said McCain was "unfamiliar" with Proposition 209 in California in 1996, which the paper correctly described as having "set the tone for a national movement to ban government preferences based on race and gender."

McCain's history on issues of race is cluttered with indecision. In 1983, he opposed the legislation for a national holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. He later called his vote a "mistake" and led an effort to establish such a holiday in Arizona.

In 1998, Arizona state senator Scott Bundgaard was pushing for a measure similar to Proposition 209. McCain, in a speech to Hispanic leaders, called such measures 'divisive.' He did not directly oppose the initiative, but news reports at the time claimed he thought it would be counterproductive.

In 2000, McCain took three different positions on the controversy over flying the Confederate flag atop the state capitol in South Carolina. Initially, he called the flag "offensive" and "a symbol of racism and slavery." But later, with an understanding that such a position could hurt his chances in the state, a normally unscripted McCain read from a press release. "Personally, I see the flag as a symbol of heritage," he said. After his campaign was finished, McCain returned to South Carolina and said he regretted making those comments, as they reflected his political goals rather than his personal principles.

McCain won't have room for such missteps this time. If he runs in a general election against Barack Obama, which seems increasingly likely, talking about race will be like walking across a minefield. Reporters, many of whom would count themselves among the minority of Americans who favor racial preferences, will analyze every statement for proper racial sensitivity. It simply won't be good enough to denounce the racist fringe.

Earlier this week, the Obama campaign showed itself ready to pounce on any insult, real or perceived. When the Drudge Report posted a photo of Obama in traditional Somali dress and reported that the photo had been "circulated" by the Clinton campaign, Obama's campaign responded forcefully. Apparently concerned that the photograph highlights Obama's race or could be seen as suggesting he is Muslim, campaign manager David Plouffe condemned the Clinton campaign for leaking it and called the act "the most shameful, offensive fear-mongering we've seen from either party in this election."

But there was no evidence that is what happened, and the email obtained by Drudge that accompanied the original photo reads more like correspondence between friends or colleagues than any attempt to smear Obama. In a conference call later that morning, Obama foreign policy adviser Richard Danzig was perhaps a bit too candid when he acknowledged that the campaign knew little about the origins of the photograph or the motivation of its sender. "I'm afraid we're not terribly well-informed about it," he conceded.

But given a chance to position its candidate as the victim of a smear, the Obama campaign didn't even wait to find out if its candidate was, in fact, the victim of a smear. Playing the victim card was politically useful. It's hard to believe the Obama campaign won't be happy to play it against John McCain, too. ♦

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The Real Reformer

McCain's superior prescription for health care.

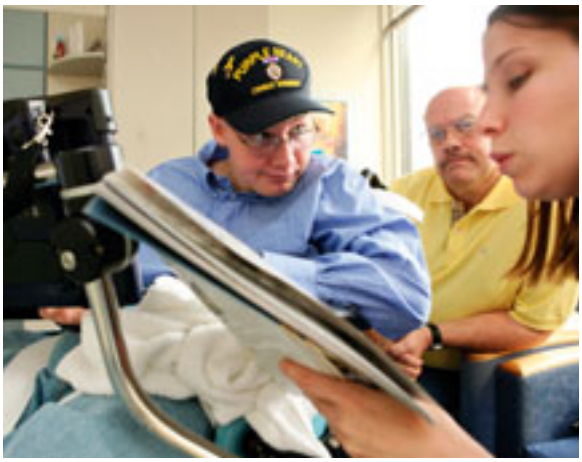
BY ROBERT GOLDBERG

John McCain's proposal for health care reform is more than a plan for making health care more affordable and for controlling costs through deregulation and market competition. It is also an attempt to restore independence and human dignity to patients. Both of his potential opponents in the fall presidential race speak only of extending the government's role in health care—a position supported in the main by large corporations, unions, and the managed-care lobbies. McCain's patient-centered position makes him—not Clinton or Obama—the force for change in health care.

McCain's plan is based around patient-centered initiatives that already have broad support among Republicans in Congress. They include letting people buy health insurance nationally instead of only from state-regulated firms; giving people the choice of purchasing coverage through cooperatives or other organizations (churches or civic groups, for example); expanding health savings accounts; and making health insurance portable by giving people tax credits of up to $5,000 per family to buy their own coverage instead of getting it through an employer.

His chief concern is for people to take ownership of their health care. McCain likes to note that "Ronald Reagan said nobody ever washed a rental car. And that's true in health insurance. If they're responsible for it, then they will take more care of it."

At the heart of McCain's proposals is his effort to allow veterans, particularly soldiers returning from Iraq with traumatic brain injury and mental illness, to get care anywhere rather than just through the Veterans Health Administration (VA): "America's veterans have fought for our freedom. We should give them freedom to choose to carry their VA dollars to a provider that gives them the timely care at high quality and in the best location."



Sergeant Eric Edmundson and father (center)

NEW YORK TIMES

What stirs McCain are stories like that of Sergeant Eric Edmundson who returned from Iraq unable to walk or talk after being hit by a roadside bomb. Edmundson was sent to a VA hospital in Richmond, Virginia, for rehabilitation care. After six months, doctors said he was in a permanent vegetative state and tried to send him to a nursing home where he would be discharged from the Army. But Edmundson's father found out that his son could use his GI vocational benefits (available only after he received VA care but also only if he remained in the service) to receive treatment at one of the world's leading traumatic brain injury (TBI) centers: the Rehabilitation Institute in Chicago. His father prevailed over VA objections. After six months of therapy at the Chicago center, Edmundson was able to talk and walked out of the rehab center under his own power.

The VA system that McCain is attacking is the starting point for the Democratic plans for universal health care. Both Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama want to expand the VA's electronic health care system to the rest of the country. Obama has promised to spend $50 billion on electronic health records based on the VA model. And Clinton likes to claim credit for that model, which she calls an astounding success:

> We started during the Clinton administration to transition the VA system to a paperless system. . . . The VA is leading the way in reducing medical errors, improving patient safety, and delivering high quality care; now this is a lesson about what can be done when we have a plan. A plan that is evidence-based, a plan that uses what we know works, and a system that we can actually get to respond to that evidence-based planning.

In fact, as a government audit discovered, the VA's paperless system has created a huge bottleneck, losing track of 53,000 veterans.

Last year, Obama introduced legislation requiring the VA to treat each returning vet in 30 days. Yet, the VA already had such a requirement, and, according to internal VA audits, 25 percent of all vets wait more than 30 days for their first exam. Of the veterans kept waiting, 27 percent had serious service-connected disabilities, including amputations and chronic problems such as frequent panic attacks. Iraq war vets often have to wait six months for their first appointment.

In some VA hospitals, vets wait 18 months for surgeries—a record worse than Canada's or England's national health care systems. The VA's budget for its health care system has doubled since 2001, and Obama still proposes to give more money.

The differences between McCain and the Democratic candidates on health care boil down to freedom of

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choice. Clinton and Obama want in varying degrees to force Americans to enroll in health plans designed by the government and pay premiums set by the government. Companies that don't cover workers would be required to pay an additional tax to subsidize what amounts to Medicaid for all. If previous experience with S-chip is a guide, it will lead private firms to dump employees into government-run plans. Both Obama and Clinton would limit what drugs and services plans pay for to what the government deems "cost effective."

If you don't want government health care, you won't be able to set up a health savings account as they will be illegal. McCain would increase the opportunities for individuals to choose the care that's best for them by giving patients and doctors the dollars, information, and freedom to make medical decisions instead of a government agency.

Indeed, if Eric Edmundson's father had possessed the freedom to take his son to the best place for care instead of waiting for a bureaucrat's approval, his son would have been walking sooner. McCain's health care plan reflects his desire to make the medical system for vets embody the same freedom and dignity they fought for in Iraq. That's a powerful vision for reforming the whole health care system. ♦

The Education of John McCain

What he can—and can't—do for the public schools.

BY CHESTER E. FINN JR. & MICHAEL J. PETRILLI

As the GOP debates whether John McCain is sufficiently Reaganesque, here's a point in the senator's favor: Like the Gipper, he doesn't consider education a top presidential priority. Indeed, McCain has said very little about the subject on the campaign trail, and his website barely touches it.

That's in vivid contrast to our last three presidents. Bush *père* campaigned to be the "education president" and swiftly convened the nation's first education summit. Clinton demonstrated his "third way" bona fides by pushing charter schools and school uniforms. And the incumbent Bush staked his claim to compassionate conservatism partly on his beloved No Child Left Behind act (NCLB) and its dramatic expansion of the federal role in education.

Such Oval Office advocacy and activism helped give life to some promising ideas—school choice and standards-testing-accountability in particular—but also created a myth and a monster.

The myth: The president can make our schools better. It's a myth that most citizens seem to believe. So do some candidates. Observe Senator Barack Obama stating, during a recent debate, with a straight face and sincere look, that "we should not accept a school in South Carolina that was built in the 1800s, where kids are having to learn in trailers, and every time the railroad goes by the tracks, the building shakes and the teacher has to stop teaching." Excuse us, Senator, but what exactly can you do for this school from the White House?

The monster: We now have a federal Department of Education meddling in schools across the land. Washington bureaucrats don't improve them but do monitor everything from teacher qualifications to reading curricula to discipline. Yet when it comes to what matters most—expectations for student learning—NCLB allows every state to grade itself, enabling most to set low standards and play games with test results.

Yes, Reagan also called for bold changes in K-12 schooling—and empowered his able education secretary, Bill Bennett, to do the same. His administration pushed for higher expectations, tougher standards, more parental choice, and a focus on character as well as sound curriculum. Yet this was mostly bully pulpit stuff; Reagan and Bennett knew that the real work of reform had to happen in states and communities, not in Washington.

McCain's instincts appear similar. It's hard to picture him spending much time visiting schools and reading to children. But he, too, could appoint an energetic education secretary (Mike Huckabee, perhaps?) and charge him/her with making some waves.

Meanwhile, the media will begin to press McCain to state specific positions on education, particularly on NCLB, whose reauthorization will be overdue by Inauguration Day. Other than indicating vague support for that law, for school choice, and for rewarding excellent teachers, it appears the Arizonan hasn't thought much about this (though he has a couple of astute advisers). So here's a suggestion.

Start by playing to your strengths, Senator, fitting education policy within three broad themes of your candidacy and worldview: keeping America confident in the face of Islamic terrorism, strengthening our ability to compete in a globalizing

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world economy, and fighting wasteful spending.

At the recent CPAC convention, McCain said he would defeat radical Islamists "by defending the values, virtues, and security of free people against those who despise all that is good about us." Yet how many young Americans truly understand and appreciate their country's "values" and "virtues"? McCain should argue that to fight and win a long-term war against extremism we must ensure that our children possess deep knowledge of U.S. history and America's role as freedom's champion. That means not letting history and civics get squeezed out of the curriculum by NCLB's obsession with reading and math scores. Students should be tested in history and civics, too, and schools with strong track records in these subjects should be cited as models.

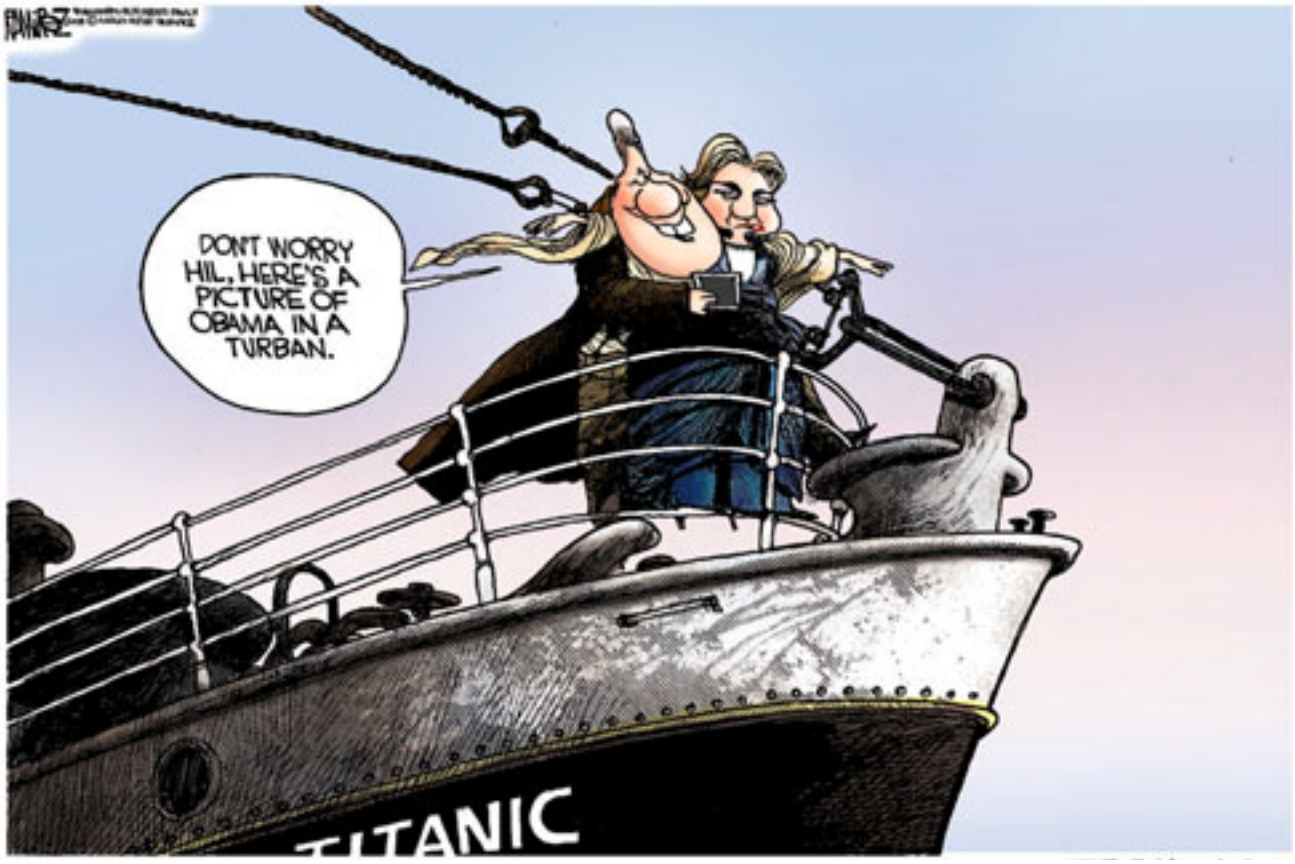
When it comes to global competition, President McCain would rally U.S. workers to compete worldwide without yielding to the siren song of protectionism. But here, too, NCLB is weakening our human-capital development with its low (and uneven) standards and neglect of high-achieving students. McCain could change this by calling on governors to develop a set of common, rigorous expectations and assessments for all young Americans from Okeechobee to Walla Walla. And he could push Congress to rewrite NCLB so it focuses not just on academic stragglers but also on our savviest youngsters, too.

As for wasteful spending, President McCain could have a field day with a K-12 education budget that's ballooned by more than 40 percent since Bush 43 took office. He could give states and communities the authority to merge all their federal funds into one flexible stream (while being held to tougher, more consistent standards for student learning). Even better, he might pick a fight over the scores of Education Department programs that don't qualify as "effective" on the Office of Management and Budget tally.

Those are the girders under a strong education platform for the presumptive Republican nominee: a U.S. history "surge"; rigorous common expectations for all students; a renewed focus on helping able kids fulfill their potential; and the unmasking of wasteful, Washington-knows-best programs.

There are plenty of other ideas worth supporting—targeted vouchers, aid for charter schools, incentives for districts to rid themselves of restrictive union contracts, and more. McCain is wading into a new issue area, however, and he needs to wet his feet before plunging all the way in. Happily for him, Obama's mushy education plan and flip-flopping on merit pay and vouchers give the Arizonan plenty of room to maneuver.

Like Reagan, McCain may never make education his top priority. But by picking a few key issues and using his power effectively, he just might be an education president anyhow. ♦



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THE PATTON OF COUNTERINSURGENCY

Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno translated the Petraeus doctrine into a winning strategy.

By Frederick W. Kagan & Kimberly Kagan

Great commanders often come in pairs: Eisenhower and Patton, Grant and Sherman, Napoleon and Davout, Marlborough and Eugene, Caesar and Labienus. Generals David Petraeus and Raymond Odierno can now be added to the list.

It's natural to assume that successful pairs of commanders complement each other's personalities (the diplomatic Eisenhower and the hard-charging Patton, for example) or that the junior partner is merely executing the vision of the other (Sherman seen as acting on Grant's orders). In reality, the task of planning and conducting large-scale military operations is too great for any single commander, no matter how talented his staff. The subordinate in every successful command pair has played a key role in designing and implementing the campaign plan.

History does not always justly appreciate such contributions. The role that Davout played in shaping operational plans for Napoleon is a matter for specialists. General Odierno deserves better. He played an absolutely essential role in designing and executing the successful counterinsurgency operations in Iraq. His contributions to securing Iraq offer many important lessons for fighting the larger war on terror. As he and his team return to Fort Hood, Texas, it is important not only to commemorate their achievement, but also to understand it.

Lieutenant General Raymond Odierno took command of Multi-National Corps-Iraq (MNC-I) on December 14, 2006. Iraq was in flames. Insurgents and death squads were killing 3,000 civilians a month. Coalition forces were sustaining more than 1,200 attacks per week. Operation Together Forward II, the 2006 campaign to clear Baghdad's most violent neighborhoods and hold them with Iraqi Security Forces, had been suspended because violence elsewhere in the capital was rising steeply. Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) owned safe havens within and around Baghdad, throughout Anbar, and in Diyala, Salah-ad-Din, and Ninewa provinces. The Iraqi government was completely paralyzed.

When General Odierno relinquished command of MNC-I on February 14, 2008, the civil war was over. Civilian casualties were down 60 percent, as were weekly attacks. AQI had been driven from its safe havens in and around Baghdad and throughout Anbar and Diyala and was attempting to reconstitute for a "last stand" in Mosul—with Coalition and Iraqi forces in pursuit. The Council of Representatives passed laws addressing de-Baathification, amnesty, provincial powers, and setting a date for provincial elections. The situation in Iraq had been utterly transformed.

As is well known, General Petraeus oversaw the writing of a new counterinsurgency doctrine before being sent to Iraq. But the doctrine did not provide a great deal of detail about how to plan and conduct such operations across a theater as large as Iraq. It was Odierno who creatively

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adapted sophisticated concepts from conventional fighting to the problems in Iraq, filling gaps in the counterinsurgency doctrine and making the overall effort successful.

THE LEGACY OF 2006

The commanders who preceded Petraeus and Odierno had put a priority on encouraging the nascent Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to take responsibility for protecting the Iraqi people. The preferred strategy was to concentrate on training the ISF while using Coalition forces for "supplementing Iraqi Security Forces in ongoing operations—and striking at Al Qaeda in Iraq in particular."

The overwhelming majority of American combat forces were concentrated on Forward Operating Bases, from where they acted to reinforce Iraqi Security Forces and to patrol areas in which there was significant violence. U.S. military operations tended to be reactive rather than proactive, episodic rather than sustained. The insufficiently trained and equipped ISF had been pushed prematurely into the fight and, rather than conducting counterinsurgency operations, relied on ineffective checkpoints. As a result, security ebbed and flowed through neighborhoods and towns but was rarely lasting, and the presence of Coalition forces provided little sense of security for Iraqi civilians.

Odierno was far less interested in shifting responsibility to the ISF. As he prepared to deploy to Iraq, he succinctly defined his objectives:

> Bottom line? Full restoration of civil authority in Baghdad. Sectarian violence reduced. Extra-governmental armed groups diminished, and their influence diminished. And the government of Iraq viewed as a legitimate institution in the eyes of the Iraqi people.

Odierno had absorbed Petraeus's new counterinsurgency doctrine and knew the importance of establishing legitimate government institutions by protecting the population from the insurgents trying to alienate them from the government.

UNDERSTAND THE ENEMY

A major assumption of previous U.S. commanders in Iraq had been that "kinetic" operations—the favored neologism for "combat"—were counter-productive, producing more resentment and more insurgents. They emphasized the need to win hearts and minds and to avoid alienating the population. While major combat operations generate resentment among the population, and may encourage indigenous forces to become dependent on outside assistance, Petraeus and Odierno recognized that such problems pale in comparison with allowing the enemy to control key terrain and attack targets at will.

Petraeus as he took command in February 2007 emphasized using combat forces to protect the population in major cities, establish and expand safe areas, and clear insurgent safe havens. It was Odierno's job to figure out how, exactly, to accomplish those tasks with the forces he had available. He came quickly to a counterintuitive conclusion: Securing Baghdad required large-scale offensive combat operations outside the city.

Previous American commanders had recognized that the violence in Iraq resulted primarily from the actions of distinct enemy organizations—rather than from any inchoate hatred between Sunni and Shia—and they had developed very sophisticated understandings of how individual enemy leaders interacted with each other and their subordinates. This approach flowed naturally from the military thinking of the late 1990s that conceived of conventional enemies as networks of technological systems (computers, communications devices, and power grids, among others). There are important nodes of a technological network that can be disabled to disrupt its functions, and, by analogy, there are people—those providing money, ideological guidance, and the human connections to disperse resources—who are the most important nodes of a terror network. Intelligence assets identified the key players, and Special Forces worked to kill or capture them in targeted raids.

According to this approach, the killing of AQI leader Abu Musab al Zarqawi in June 2006 should have disrupted the al Qaeda network severely. But AQI rapidly regrouped after Zarqawi's death under a successor, Abu Ayyub al Masri. The American counterterrorism approach disrupted the network but did not eliminate it. AQI's ability to generate violence in Baghdad through its signature vehicle bombs actually increased in the months after Zarqawi's death, as did civilian casualties and Shia retaliatory attacks. The entire cycle of violence that attacks on the terrorist network were supposed to bring under control actually ramped up.

Just as Odierno took command, Coalition forces captured an AQI map depicting Baghdad as the center of the fight. AQI's main focus in 2006 was establishing safe havens in West Baghdad. The rise in power and ferocity of the Shia militias, however, forced them to establish bases outside of the capital from which to attack both Coalition forces and their Shia opponents. The map showed how AQI had divided the areas around the capital into regions, how it used these suburban safe havens (in Baghdad's "belts") as part of a complex system for moving

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General Odierno meeting an Iraqi army commander in the northern city of Mosul in April 2007

MAURICIO LIMA / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

weapons into the city, and how it carried the fight south of Baghdad.

AQI's approach—and Odierno's new understanding of it—made traditional military concepts like lines-of-communication, support areas, and key terrain relevant to the counterinsurgency strategy. Insurgents moving from the belts to the capital required access to particular roads. Maintaining that access required holding neighborhoods bordering the roads. Car-bombers needed factories in which to make their weapons. IED-users needed ammunition stores and ways of moving their IEDs from depots to frontline fighters. Leaders needed safehouses to allow their free movement in the city and headquarters outside the capital from which they could direct operations. Thinking of the enemy as a network, as U.S. forces had previously been doing, underemphasized the importance of geography and of controlling key terrain to the enemy's operations. Odierno prepared to take that terrain away.

ALLOCATE FORCES

Given the enemy's situation in Iraq, Odierno knew he would need more troops to make the counterinsurgency doctrine operational. He asked for them in December 2006, and President Bush announced the "surge" in January 2007.

The surge brigades made it possible to conduct multiple simultaneous operations rather than focusing on one problem or area at a time. U.S. forces within Baghdad would provide as much security as possible for the population, disrupt enemy groups operating from within the capital, and identify the enemy safe havens within the city. At the same time, Odierno planned to deploy troops into the belts around the capital to attack the enemy's support zones and lines of communication and to eliminate the suburban safe havens that were essential to the functioning of the enemy system.

Odierno worked with the U.S. Special Operations Forces under the command of Lieutenant General Stan McChrystal to make sure they kept up the pressure on key leaders within the terrorist network. Their precise and skillful attacks not only took out insurgent leaders but also provided valuable additional intelligence that Odierno used to refine his plans. And Odierno's opera-

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THE KEY OPERATIONS

With Petraeus and his staff, Odierno planned and conducted four large-scale military operations

- **Operation Fardh al-Qanoon**
  (February 2007) dispersing U.S. and Iraqi troops throughout Baghdad in order to provide security for its inhabitants
- **Operation Phantom Thunder**
  (June and July 2007) clearing Al Qaeda in Iraq from its major sanctuaries
- **Operation Phantom Strike**
  (from mid-August) pursuing AQI operatives as they attempt to regroup in more remote areas
- **Operation Phantom Phoenix**
  (early 2008) pursuing the enemy into Diyala and setting the conditions for the battle for Mosul

tions to clear and hold key terrain would greatly facilitate the Special Forces' efforts by flushing key enemy leaders out of their safe havens. Odierno's kinetic operations developed a positive synergy with the more traditional counterterrorism approach, making both much more effective than either could have been alone.

The five additional brigades President Bush was sending to Iraq arrived gradually, at the rate of about one a month beginning in January 2007. Stemming the violence would require all the additional brigades, but they would not be completely available until June. In the five-month interval, Petraeus and Odierno conducted what the military calls "preparatory operations" to "set the conditions" for "decisive operations." Commanders do this by deploying their forces to the theater, establishing bases, supplying them, organizing command structures, reconnoitering the terrain, developing intelligence about the enemy, and creating maneuver corridors. These tasks often involve units in combat. Forces moving into areas that the enemy had controlled must often fight to establish their new bases. When units reconnoiter the new areas, they make contact with the enemy and fight skirmishes. In each case, the purpose of "preparatory operations" is not to fight and eliminate the enemy from an area, but rather to create the preconditions for successful "decisive operations" in the future that will destroy the enemy.

Petraeus and Odierno used these months to develop a sense of how long it would take a brigade to reconnoiter and master urban and rural terrain before operations could begin, and how fast a brigade could clear that terrain with the mixture of forces it had available. The protracted nature of the conflict played to America's advantage, surprisingly, as new commanders were able to learn from previous examples and personal experiences even as they adapted to a changing situation and a fluid enemy. Lieutenant General Peter Chiarelli, Odierno's immediate predecessor at MNC-I, had already recognized the need for a shift in approach and begun to reconnoiter the belts around Baghdad and areas within the city before he relinquished command in December 2006. When President Bush announced the change in strategy and surge of forces in January 2007, Odierno was already using the forces that he had, and those that were arriving, to shape the conditions for the large offensive that could not begin until June. He and Petraeus then sent the first two new brigades into Baghdad, and the next three to the belts.

INTEGRATE OPERATIONS

When Petraeus took command in February, he set to work integrating Odierno's developing operational plan into an overarching political and military strategy. He established a Joint Strategic Assessment Team to review Coalition strategy and to work in conjunction with the U.S. embassy in Baghdad to develop a Joint Campaign Plan to harmonize military and non-military operations throughout the country. While this team produced a superb product, the overall effort to integrate all elements of American national power within Iraq was only partially successful due to resistance from civilian agencies in Washington and some U.S. officials in Baghdad—as well as to the natural friction that results from trying to coordinate the activities of disparate organizations in a complex environment. It was Ambassador Ryan Crocker's arrival in Baghdad in March 2007 that transformed the U.S. mission in Iraq. He pushed hard to implement the Joint Campaign Plan—an effort worthy of a story all its own.

Petraeus also challenged the relationship between U.S. leaders in Iraq and their Iraqi counterparts. His predecessors' emphasis on encouraging the Iraqis to do things for themselves had led them to defer to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki whenever possible and to try to avoid confrontations with the inexperienced Iraqi leadership. Petraeus took a more activist approach and relentlessly pressured Maliki and other Iraqi officials to make critical decisions and to abandon counterproductive behaviors. Crocker supported this approach and added to the pressure on the Iraqis to make the hard decisions and to take risks they would have preferred to avoid.

Petraeus and Odierno also placed a heavy empha-

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sis on the non-kinetic aspects of counterinsurgency. Chiarelli had long argued that improving the quality of life of Iraqis and addressing the rampant unemployment of military-age males was essential to the success of the Coalition efforts. But he got tepid support for these non-military efforts from other U.S. agencies. Petraeus and Odierno breathed new life into them by pushing their forces out into Iraqi neighborhoods with instructions to spend money (from the Commander's Emergency Response Program funds) to create temporary jobs and conduct immediate-impact reconstruction projects in any areas that were secure enough to permit them. The increased number of troops, their presence in the neighborhoods, and their ability to establish personal relationships with members of the community only added to the effectiveness of these emergency projects. This focus on harmonizing the non-kinetic with the kinetic was a key element of Petraeus's new counterinsurgency doctrine, but the skill with which he and Odierno actually executed the concept on the ground is what matters.

The Petraeus-Odierno command team, ably supported by Crocker, thus dramatically increased the pressure on all of the major Iraqi actors to abandon violence and start making compromises while also encouraging the average Iraqi to believe that there was hope of a better future if he stopped fighting. Odierno's forces hit both Sunni and Shia insurgent and militia groups hard, forcing them into a defensive posture—and generally making violence a much less attractive option. At the same time, Petraeus and Crocker pushed the Iraqi government to support the military operations with their own military and police efforts and with political negotiations and reconciliation efforts. These would begin to pay major dividends by the end of Odierno's tenure.

Neither Petraeus nor Odierno was uniquely responsible for any one aspect of the intellectual framework or its execution. Like any of the great command pairs of history, they shared a set of tasks that would have crushed any single individual, and each made key contributions to the development of a strategy that led to extraordinary and surprising success.

LAUNCH SIMULTANEOUS AND SUCCESSIVE OPERATIONS

For all the sophistication of this integrated political-military and kinetic/non-kinetic approach to the conflict, Odierno is likely to be remembered in military history as the man who redefined the operational art of counterinsurgency with a series of offensives in 2007 and 2008.

"Operational art" is the concept of how to fight wars, developed most comprehensively in the Cold War era—when doctrine called for multiple, simultaneous, and successive operations across a theater. A well-designed campaign consisted of multiple battles occurring at the same time to achieve a common goal (the landings on different Normandy beaches to dislodge the enemy from a defensive position on D-Day, for example) followed by a rapid series of fights and maneuvers to pursue the enemy, drive him from his objectives, and prevent him from regrouping (Patton's relentless pursuit of German forces in France and Germany in 1944-45). Before 2007 there had been considerable debate within the Army about whether there even was an "operational art" in counterinsurgency, let alone what it might be. Odierno demonstrated that there was.

He believed that the surge allowed for "simultaneous and sustained offensive operations, in partnership with the Iraqi Security Forces." In conjunction with Petraeus and his staff, Odierno planned and conducted three successive, large-scale military operations in 2007, and a fourth in early 2008. The first was Operation Fardh al-Qanoon ("Enforcing the Law" in Arabic), also known as the Baghdad Security Plan, which starting in February dispersed U.S. and Iraqi troops throughout the capital in order to provide security for its inhabitants. The second was Operation Phantom Thunder, which in June and July cleared Al Qaeda in Iraq from its major sanctuaries. The third offensive was Operation Phantom Strike, in which, from mid-August on, Coalition and Iraqi forces pursued AQI operatives and other enemies as they fled their sanctuaries and attempted to regroup in more remote areas. Odierno's last major offensive was Operation Phantom Phoenix, launched just weeks before his departure, to pursue the enemy into Diyala and set the conditions for the battle for Mosul—while providing essential services and jump-starting provincial government in less-contested areas.

The key to the success of these operations was the combination of breadth and continuity. All of them struck multiple enemy safe havens and lines of communication at the same time—in contrast with previous U.S. military operations that had generally attacked enemy concentrations one at a time. Enemy groups could no longer move easily from one safe area to another and those that tried to move suffered serious losses as they dispersed. The rapid movement from one operation to the next denied the enemy time to regroup. As scattered insurgent leaders and fighters attempted to reconsolidate in new areas, Coalition forces hit them again and again.

AQI fighters driven from Anbar, Baghdad, and the suburban belts into Diyala found reinforced Coalition and Iraqi forces there pounding them. Those that sur-

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vived fled north along the Hamrin Ridge toward Mosul, where Coalition forces pursued them and doggedly prevented them from establishing secure bases even in that remote and rugged terrain. As AQI has attempted to reconstitute in and around Mosul, it has once again encountered a growing U.S. and Iraqi presence attacking before it can dig in. The simultaneity of the attacks and the relentlessness of the pursuit shattered Al Qaeda in Iraq, reducing it to ever smaller and more isolated pockets that increasingly lack the ability to coordinate the large-scale terror operations that had characterized it in 2006.

As a purely military operation, the series of MNC-I offensives easily bears comparison with Patton's race across France or the Soviet destruction of German forces in 1944 and 1945. That the Iraq operations occurred in the midst of a counterinsurgency and helped gain the support of the local populations is a testimony to the tactical skill and precision with which American forces fought, as well as to the brilliance of the political and diplomatic efforts of Petraeus and Crocker to set the non-kinetic conditions for success.

General Raymond Odierno and U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker in Ramadi for a meeting with Sunni sheikhs from Anbar Province in September 2007

GETTY IMAGES

IRAQ AWAKES

There is a common myth that the "Awakening" movement in Anbar occurred independently of—even in spite of—the Coalition military operations in 2007. It is true that it began emerging in 2006 thanks to the hard and skillful fighting and negotiating of Army Colonel Sean MacFarland and a number of Marine officers and their subordinates. But Odierno leapt on it and further encouraged it not only in Anbar, but throughout Iraq. He met with the originator of the Awakening movement, Sheikh Sattar Abu Risha, in December 2006 and encouraged U.S. soldiers in Anbar to continue fighting and negotiating in support of Abu Risha's efforts. As other groups emerged in and around Baghdad, Odierno and Petraeus seized on opportunities to make friends of former enemies.

This was no easy decision. Americans had been dying at the hands of Sunni Arab resistance groups since 2003. Many of the "concerned local citizens" (CLCs, now called "Sons of Iraq" because "concerned local citizens" translates poorly into Arabic) were themselves former members of the insurgency. There was some grumbling among U.S. troops about cooperating with former enemies and much concern that the "transformation" of these insurgents into partners would only be temporary.

Petraeus and Odierno, however, saw it as an opportunity. Contrary to popular misconception, they refused requests to provide weapons to the CLCs (who almost invariably had their own weapons anyway). They insisted that all CLCs provide detailed biometric data (fingerprints and retinal scans), the serial numbers of their weapons, their home addresses and family relationships. Counterinsurgency experts have often wryly remarked that it would be easy to end an insurgency if the enemy would only wear uniforms. By collecting all of this information about the CLCs, Odierno and Petraeus were in essence putting uniforms on them. Any CLC who turned against the Coalition or Iraqi forces could be readily identified if he, or his weapon, were captured—and Coalition troops would know immediately where he and his family lived. There have been very few reports of any CLC members taking the risk.

"Will you stay this time?" That was one of the first questions prospective CLCs asked of U.S. troops in 2007. Memories of intermittent security and of the brutal punishments meted out by the returning insurgents to individuals (and their families) who had collaborated with the Coalition made many Iraqis wary in 2007. But because of the change in strategy and operations inaugurated by Petraeus and

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Odierno, American soldiers could promise to stay. As more and more Iraqis came to believe in this promise, the movement blossomed, spreading rapidly to Baghdad, Diyala, Babil, and parts of Salah-ad-Din province as it consolidated in Anbar. In December 2006, Iraqi society was mobilizing for a sectarian civil war; by December 2007, it was mobilizing to stop the violence.

The Awakening movement begun in 2006 has turned out to be more than just a revulsion against violence and terror. It has evolved, at least in some areas, into grassroots political movements responding to Iraqis fed up with the gridlock in the central government in Baghdad. While the Anbar Awakening continues to efficiently combat AQI efforts to reinfiltrate the province, it is also forming a complex set of political parties and factions that should pose a serious challenge to the Iraqi Islamic party that nominally represents most of Iraq's Sunni Arabs in the Council of Representatives.

The attempts of Shia tribal leaders south of Baghdad to form their own "awakenings" puzzled many at first, as did the virulence of the Iraqi government's objections to such movements within the Shia community. Visiting the area in February, we met with several of these tribal leaders, and the issue became clear. Even within Iraq's Shia population, frustration with the Maliki government runs high. That frustration is increasingly expressed not simply as resentment of Maliki and his allies, but in a rejection of clerical government (the dominant Shia party south of Baghdad is controlled by a turbaned cleric, Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim); of Iranian influence; and of regionalism, factionalism, and sectarianism. Iraqis, both Sunni and Shia, are increasingly defining themselves as Iraqis, that is to say Arabs, rather than Sunnis or Shia. Their growing rejection of clericalism and preference for secular government was noted recently by Amir Taheri in the *Wall Street Journal*:

> Only the next general election in 2009 could reveal the true strength of the political parties, since it will not be contested based on bloc lists. Frequent opinion polls, however, show that support for avowedly Islamist parties, both Shiite and Sunni, would not exceed 25 percent of the popular vote.

That finding is supported by the sense of those interacting regularly with individual Iraqis outside the Green Zone and provincial offices. The great challenge in 2008 will be harnessing these growing sentiments through provincial elections and preparing for new parliamentary elections in 2009. The alacrity with which Petraeus and Odierno seized on the Awakening movement in 2007 was a key element in making this potentially transformative development possible.

Odierno showed that there is a need even in counterinsurgency theory for skillful combat operations and that traditional ways of thinking about war can be appropriately adapted to novel circumstances.

THE FIGHT GOES ON

Ray Odierno did not win the Iraq war—indeed, the war is still very much ongoing and victory is by no means assured. (And both he and Petraeus would insist on giving any recognition to their staffs and to the men and women of the American armed forces.) The narrative of Iraq's transformation on Odierno's watch lends itself easily to a triumphal presentation that would be utterly inappropriate. Lieutenant General Lloyd Austin has replaced Odierno as the MNC-I commander, and the fight goes on.

Even as you read this article, U.S. and Iraqi forces are waging a battle for Mosul, and Coalition troops continue to confront AQI, Jaish al-Mahdi militiamen, Iranian-backed fighters, and other insurgent and terrorist groups. Americans and Iraqis are killing and dying in a struggle to preserve and expand the gains of 2007. If America and its military and political leaders do not remain committed to continuing and improving the strategies that have brought us this far, if they do not provide our troops and civilians in Iraq with the tools and resources they desperately need, then all of the gains we have made can still be lost. Insurgencies don't end with treaty-signing ceremonies or parades. Often it is not possible to know that they have ended until years after the fact.

Odierno's tenure as commander of Multi-National Corps-Iraq was an astonishing period in American military history, and his contribution deserves note as he and his staff return home to new postings. Their efforts showed that there is a need even in sophisticated counterinsurgency theory for skillful combat operations, that traditional ways of thinking about war can be appropriately adapted to novel circumstances, and that it is possible to be a warrior, nation-builder, mediator, diplomat, economist, and role-model all at once. At least, it is possible for heroes like Ray Odierno and the soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and civilians he commanded for 15 months at one of the most critical junctures in recent American history. ♦

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You deserve a factual look at . . .

Turmoil in Gaza

What can the world, what can Israel do to restore order?

About two years ago, yielding to the pressure of "world opinion," Israel decided to abandon Gaza and to withdraw the about 8,000 Israelis who had lived there for generations and who had created flourishing agriculture and successful industry.

What are the facts?

Israel's trial balloon. For Israelis, the abandonment of Gaza was also a trial balloon to assess what the relationship with a nascent Palestinian state would be. They got a quick and decisive answer. Almost from the very first day of their "liberation," the Gazans launched daily rocket attacks on Israel. Fortunately, so far "only" about fifteen people have been killed and "only" about 300 injured by those relatively unsophisticated weapons. But it is only a matter of time until one of those rockets – whose range and effectiveness are being constantly improved – hits a school, a large housing complex or a hospital.

In the meantime, Israel responds with pinpoint volleys on the launching pads of those rockets. But they are easily movable and purposely located in heavily populated neighborhoods. It is thanks only to Israeli respect for human life that tens of thousands of Gazans have not perished in Israel's response to those barrages. We must ask ourselves what our country would do if Mexico were to launch thousands of rockets into San Diego. The answer is perfectly clear: We would retaliate in full force.

A wall forms the border between the Gaza Strip and Egypt. It is lightly guarded by Egyptian troops. The terrorist Hamas government decided to breach this wall and tens of thousands of Gazans burst into the Egyptian Sinai. The wall has now been rebuilt and most of the Gazans have been returned to their territory. Some, however, are still roaming the Sinai and have committed suicide attacks on Israeli citizens.

Gaza in misery. The situation in Gaza is indeed miserable. That is not the fault of the Israelis, but the fault of the Gazans/Palestinians themselves. In 1948, the UN proposed that "Palestine" be divided into an Arab and into a Jewish sector, with Jerusalem becoming an "internationalized" city. The Jews reluctantly accepted this partition plan. The Arabs rejected it out of hand and invaded the newly-born Jewish state with the armies of six nations. Had the Arabs accepted the partition plan or any of the many Israeli offers of conciliation, they would now have had their own state for sixty years and would enjoy prosperity and economic success just as Israel. Instead, focused exclusively on the destruction of Israel and the killing of the hated Jews, Gazans are living in misery, totally depending on the dole of Israel and on the support of the world.

Rather than bombing Gaza in response to the daily barrages of rockets, Israel has responded and is so far continuing to respond by selectively withholding economic support for Gaza. Although Israel allows the importation of essential foods and medical supplies, it has curtailed the importation of gasoline, diesel fuel and electricity. The world is outraged, but it is as humane a response as possible to the incessant shelling of Israeli cities.

> "Israel will think more than twice before turning Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") over to the Palestinians."

Constant smuggling of arms. Even under the supposedly watchful eyes of the Egyptians, scores of tunnels from Egypt into Gaza have been constructed. High-power explosives and advanced weapons are daily smuggled through these tunnels into Gaza. They are supplied and paid for primarily by Iran, which is closely allied to Gaza's Hamas terrorist government. One wonders why these tunnels are not being used to import food, fuel, medicine and clothing, rather than weapons. Also, why should Israel be responsible for the supplying of Gaza? There are no good answers to these questions.

When the Jews evacuated Gaza, they left hundreds of beautiful homes behind. The Gazans destroyed them. They were going to build highrises instead. In the more than two years since the Israelis left, not a single brick has been laid. The Gazans destroyed and plundered the sophisticated and fully computerized greenhouse installations that the Jews had left behind. They were worth millions of dollars, could have produced food for the residents and millions of dollars in yearly revenue for the impoverished territory.

It is said that one of the reasons for Gaza's misery is that it is so densely populated. Yet, Singapore, for instance, and Hong Kong are much more densely populated than Gaza. But the comparison to Singapore is significant. It, too, is densely populated, is bordered by an unfriendly neighbor, and has been devastated by war. Today, Singapore is an oasis of prosperity, a bustling center of financial and economic activity. Gaza, with the unstinting help of Israel and with the billions of dollars that the world community has poured into it, could also be such an oasis of peace and prosperity instead of the hovel of misery and decay and the cauldron of violence that it is today.

The withdrawal-from-Gaza experiment did not work. Gazans destroyed the infrastructure and the basis for prosperity that Israel left in the territory. If, instead of being singlemindedly focused on lobbing rockets into Israel, it would have concentrated on peace and on sound development, Gaza could today be on the road to being another Singapore. But Gazans threw away that opportunity. What is more, having had the very bad experience with Gaza, Israel will think more than twice before turning Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") over to the Palestinians. Israel – its people, its cities, its airports and its industrial and military infrastructure – would be under the guns of those who are sworn to destroy it.

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Sir Edward Elgar at the podium, with George Bernard Shaw to his left and the future King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to his right, 1931

FOX PHOTOS / GETTY IMAGES

In Tune With the Times

A second look at Edward Elgar BY GEORGE B. STAUFFER

Musicians and music institutions, it seems, are always eager to celebrate major anniversaries of major composers.

Within the last decade or so we've marked a Brahms Year (1997, the 100th anniversary of his death), a Bach Year (2000, the 250th anniversary of his death), and a Mozart Year (2006, the 250th anniversary of his birth), and the music festivals and scholarly conferences spawned by these celebrations have offered rich opportunities to survey composers' lives and works and weigh how their stock is doing in recent days. The festivals, in particular, have also provided the chance to scrutinize the composers' lesser-known creations, to see if we've missed anything in our rush to hear the blockbuster masterpieces one more time.

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Edward Elgar and His World
Edited by Byron Adams
Princeton, 448 pp., $22.95

Although you wouldn't have known it here in the United States, we recently concluded an Elgar Year. Born 150 years ago last June 2, Sir Edward Elgar tends to be appreciated chiefly in Britain, where he is hailed as the founder of the 20th-century English Music Renaissance, the first great native-born composer since Henry Purcell (who died in 1695). In music, the classical and romantic periods seem to have passed Britain by (the Germans called it "The Land without Music"). Elgar's *Enigma Variations*, cello and violin concertos, and string works, written at the beginning of the modern era, found a place in the international repertory and served to reestablish England's reputation on the music scene.

Still, were it not for the ubiquitous use of *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1* at graduation ceremonies, Elgar would not be a household name in America.

Unfazed by the lack of interest in Elgar here, the Bard Music Festival, led by its artistic director Leon Botstein, devoted two weekends of concerts last summer to the composer's works. The

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festival not only resurrected pieces rarely heard on American soil but also produced this handsome volume of essays by a dozen scholars, who strive to assess Elgar's place in music history. Given the paradoxes in his life and works, this is not an easy task.

Edward Elgar was born in 1857 into a solid working-class family in Broadheath, near Worcester in west-central England. He studied music with his father, a journeyman musician, and eventually succeeded him as organist of St. George's (Roman Catholic) Church in Worcester. Aside from a few professional violin lessons in London, Elgar was self-taught. After working his way through local music organizations, as conductor of the Worcester Glee Club, as "composer in ordinary" at the Powick County Lunatic Asylum, and then as organist at St. George's, he eventually moved to London in 1889 at age 32.

In Worcester, Elgar had depended heavily on private students for income; in London, none materialized, and within two years he was forced to leave the city to live in Malvern, where he eventually served as conductor of the Worcestershire Philharmonic Orchestra.

A series of successful cantatas and oratorios written for provincial choir festivals—*The Black Knight*, *Scenes from the Saga of King Olaf*, *Caractacus*, and finally his choral masterpiece, *The Dream of Gerontius*, completed in 1900—brought him recognition. *The Enigma Variations*, so called because each section is prefaced by the initials of fancied names of Elgar's friends who are portrayed in the music, and his symphonies and concertos, brought him fame. A series of rousing marches—most notably the *Imperial March* for Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, the *Coronation March* for George V, and the *Pomp and Circumstance* marches—brought him glory.

With these successes Elgar was able to return to London in triumph, moving into Severn, a graciously appointed, custom-built house in Hampstead. He was knighted in 1904, and awarded honorary degrees from Cambridge, Oxford, Aberdeen, Leeds, and Yale, which he visited in 1905, on the first of several trips to America. He was also appointed Peyton Professor of Music at the University of Birmingham, where he presented a series of lectures on the state of music in Britain. Covent Garden devoted a three-day festival entirely to his music, the first time an English composer was so honored. After the death of his wife in 1919 he returned to Worcester, where he died in 1934.

With such a triumphant climb, what more could Elgar want? Respect and inner peace, one suspects. For although he was feted in Britain as the Empire's most important composer, he nevertheless remained an outsider, frequently haunted by inner doubts. As a Catholic, he stood apart from England's Protestant majority, and as the son of a jack-of-all-trades musician (as late as 1897 he termed himself "a piano-tuner's son"), he remained outside the British upper class. Moreover, as an autodidact who built his career writing for amateur choruses, he was slow to find acceptance in the European community of professional composers.

The bulk of the essays in *Edward Elgar and His World* focus on these obstacles, which may have been responsible for producing a man with a dual persona. On the one hand there is the Worcestershire Elgar, who cherished privacy, loved riddles (his musical scores are filled with cryptic quotations), praised country life, and wrote gentle string music. On the other hand, there is the Lord Elgar, who coveted London social gatherings, championed pure instrumental music, went to the theater, and wrote bombastic marches.

Will the real Elgar stand up?

As Daniel M. Grimley notes in an essay on Elgar and populism, Elgar appears to have reveled in his ability to write rousing melodies, once remarking to a friend that he had just composed "a tune that will knock 'em—knock 'em flat." Just how flat could be seen at the London premiere of the first *Pomp and Circumstance* March in 1901. The conductor, Henry Wood, reported:

> The people simply rose and yelled. I had to play it again—with the same result. In fact, they refused to let me go on with the program. After considerable delay, while the audience roared its applause, I went off and fetched Harry Dearth who was to sing *Hiawatha's Vision* [the next piece on the program]. But they would not listen. Merely to restore order, I played the march a third time. And that, I may say, was the one and only time in the history of the Promenade concerts that an orchestra item was accorded a double encore.

The lesson was not lost on Elgar, who wrote four more *Pomp and Circumstance* marches over the next three decades.

While Elgar was enjoying the British acclaim, his more progressive colleagues on the continent were taking hits. Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* was booed mercilessly and *La Mer* dubbed *Le Mal de Mer.* Richard Strauss's *Salome* was termed disgusting and degenerate. And Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of*

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Mtsensk was described as the glorification of the stuff filthy pencils write on lavatory walls. And this is to say nothing of the riot provoked by Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring* at its first performance in Paris in 1913.

As Grimley points out, Elgar may have complained to a friend that the audience at the premiere of his Second Symphony sat and listened "like stuffed pigs," but his fundamentally conservative and comfortable idiom never incurred the wrath leveled at his pathbreaking contemporaries. By producing works that were distinctly British—"at once breezy and beefy," as a writer in the *Manchester Guardian* put it—Elgar built a strong and loyal following.

If he was attacked for anything, it was for appearing to embrace British imperialism and serving as its chief musical propagandist. Works such as *The Empire March*, *The Crown of India* (which included the song "The Rule of England"), and the *Pomp and Circumstance* marches stirred patriotic feelings about British rule. The famous trio from *Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1*—the heroic melody whose crescendos spur the swelling of parents' chests at American commencements—was so pride-inducing that Elgar recycled it to great effect in the *Coronation Ode* as a hymn, "The Land of Hope and Glory." This quickly became the unofficial anthem of the Tory party. Not many composers used the designation *nobilmente* in their scores.

The remainder of *Pomp and Circumstance No. 1*—the part unfamiliar to most Americans—is a brash, frenetically paced march. Grimley calls this "drum-stirring music," but it goes beyond that. It sounds mechanical and angular, like the gnashing of gear-teeth or the pumping of pistons. Elgar seems to be portraying the metallic edge of modernism, something akin to military machinery throttling up for action. There is no romance here, no *nobilmente*, only the stark realism of 20th-century warfare.

It is lamentable that Elgar's far gentler choral works are seldom performed here. They show a very different side of the composer, a man seeking universal peace and transcendence. We see this serenity in Elgar's string music and in the pastoral passages of the well-known concertos, symphonies, and *Enigma Variations*. But it is especially striking in his choral works. Several of his best pieces—*The Black Knight*, *The Saga of King Olaf*, and to some extent *The Apostles*—are based on the poetry of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

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As Leon Botstein notes in a summary essay, although Longfellow and Elgar worked at opposite ends of the 19th century, they were kindred spirits in many regards: Both wished to enlighten, educate, and unify their audiences. Longfellow's poetry, with its lyrical, easy-to-memorize verse, opened the world of classical learning to middle-class readers, while its surface propriety veiled intense and vaguely erotic emotions. Beginning with *Hyperion* (which Elgar cited throughout his life) and continuing through *The Song of Hiawatha* and *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, Longfellow created a poetic *lingua franca* for English-speaking readers that was almost as popular in Britain as it was in the United States.

If Longfellow invented poetry as a public idiom, as Christoph Irmscher has claimed, Elgar similarly wished to break down the barriers of high culture and create music that would speak to general listeners. In his lectures at the University of Birmingham, Elgar lamented the poor taste of British audiences and advocated state-subsidized music, a national opera, and the construction of large public halls in every town—halls that could host cultural events at affordable prices. Elgar's choral works, often based on historical romances or the Bible, capture this populist spirit. Perfectly tailored to choral-society performances, they engender communal warmth and catharsis. It is difficult to believe they were written by a man who relished being knighted.

Elgar's crowning choral work is *The Dream of Gerontius*. Based on the doctrinal Roman Catholic poem of John Henry Newman, it portrays the death of an old man and his rebirth in the next world. Elgar's setting is starkly dramatic, with Wagnerian leitmotivs, majestic melodies, offstage choruses, and swelling orchestral accompaniment conspiring to produce a monumental effect. Although Elgar claimed that the work was humanistic in nature, and represented man's universal plight, *Gerontius* was nevertheless banned for many years at Gloucester Cathedral for being "too Catholic." One senses that Elgar was attempting to create a pan-Christian work, in the fashion of Bach's B-Minor Mass, rather than a Catholic polemic. *Gerontius* has been termed the greatest English oratorio, and at the end of the manuscript Elgar quoted from John Ruskin: "This is the best of me."

At the Bard Festival Botstein and his band of musicians performed *The Dream of Gerontius* and other choral and chamber works that fell into disfavor in the 20th century's rush to embrace a more dissonant, atonal idiom. Now that such music has moved into a postmodern phase, and Richard Danielpour, Bright Sheng, and other composers are giving us plush, tonal scores once again, perhaps it is time to return to the real thing. Accepting and maybe even embracing the paradoxes posed by the patriotic marches, we might want to consider giving Sir Edward Elgar's best pieces another look, even if the Elgar Year is behind us. ♦

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Little Soso

For Stalin, the child was father of the tyrant.

BY MICHAEL WEISS

There's a grim irony in the fact that Joseph Stalin first made a name for himself—even if it was only one of his many pseudonyms—as a poet. It was the poets, after all, who understood him best:

> *But wherever there's a snatch of talk*
> *it turns to the Kremlin mountaineer,*
>
> *the ten thick worms his fingers,*
> *his words like measures of his weight,*
>
> *the huge laughing cockroaches on his top lip,*
> *the glitter of his boot-rims.*
>
> *Ringed with a scum of chicken-necked bosses*
> *he toys with the tributes of half-men.*

It cost Osip Mandelstam his freedom and his sanity to compose these lines in 1934, the year of Sergei Kirov's murder, which furnished the paranoid rationale for the purging of Old Bolsheviks ("he rolls the executions on his tongue like berries") and the establishment of a one-man dictatorship in Russia.

Young Stalin
by Simon Sebag Montefiore
Knopf, 496 pp., $30

"Red Tsar" is how Simon Sebag Montefiore described Stalin in his previous book exploring the Kremlin mountaineer's *sanctum sanctorum* of terrified toadies and sybaritic lieutenants. Having thus expertly dealt with the adult years, the historian now sets out to capture the totalitarian in bloom. *Young Stalin* is ambitiously introduced as a "pre-history of the USSR itself, a study of the subterranean worm and the silent chrysalis before it hatched the steel-winged butterfly."

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Well, we live in an age of prequels, and so a project like this surely tantalizes. It also succeeds, on the whole. Sebag Montefiore has given us the most detailed and comprehensive portrait of the mass murdering ideologue just as he was getting warmed up. And if the author occasionally elides one of Bertram Wolfe's principal injunctions for historical writing—not to fashion a prologue with the end always in mind—then this can be forgiven since Stalin was in many ways a prototype of the adolescent villain. We can't *help* but notice the monster evolving.

"Soso" Djugashvili, born in 1879, was abused by his alcoholic father, and he in turn abused animals and other children. Diminutive, sickly, and something of a mama's boy, he viewed the woman who bore him—as he later did his wives, lovers, friends, and offspring—as eminently dispensable in the pursuit of his own megalomaniacal goals. As a seminarian he suffered the torments of a repressive and obnoxious priest, nicknamed Father Black Spot, who chased down every "forbidden" text and wayward student, instilling in Stalin the importance of "surveillance, spying, invasion of inner life, violation of feelings" (these are the dictator's own words) that would become the institutions of the Soviet state.

It's worth noting that Stalin's rhetorical style also took shape during his larval revolutionary period. He once exhorted a crowd: "Do you think we can defeat the Tsar with empty hands? Never! We need three things: one—guns, two—guns and three, again and again—guns!" Compare this reinforced *troika* with the methods Nikita Khrushchev claimed, in his 1956 "Secret Speech," that Stalin prescribed for investigators of the Doctor's Plot: "Beat, beat, and once again, beat!" The loss of a comrade during a bank robbery incited this pseudo-profound elegy from the sometime versifier: "What can we do? One can't pick a rose without pricking oneself on a thorn. Leaves fall from the trees in autumn—but fresh ones grow in the spring."

Pastoral shades of omelets and broken eggs.

Even as a star pupil of the Gori Church School, young Stalin could brook no rival for attention or physical prowess. He deadlegged a boy who danced the Georgian *lekuri* better and nearly drowned another by pushing him into the Kura River. When this second boy protested that he couldn't swim, Stalin told him, "Yes, but when you got into trouble, you had to learn to swim."

That this troglodytic Aesop won himself a small army of early admirers should teach us something about human frailty. Stalin knew that brutality captivates the ordinary man as much as it does the psychopath. He occupied a middle position between these two roles, and his great luck in life was to have been born with all the vestments of ordinariness—a "plebian without pose, uncommunicative by nature, even embarrassed by strangers," as the (sympathetic) journalist Emil Ludwig once described him. In a sense, then, it's quite easy to see why Stalinism became the opiate of 20th-century intellectuals: At bottom, the intellectuals *envied* its murderous, inscrutable figurehead, a man capable of doing what they could only rationalize away.

One could go on in this vein. Yet there are three underlying themes that distinguish the present volume as perhaps the best-yet resource on Stalinology. The first underscores the Georgian's capacity for *konspiratsia* and gangsterism, particularly in the fine art of sniffing out traitors. (It's true that all the Bolsheviks, Stalin included, missed the biggest traitor of them all, Roman Malinovsky, the Okhrana agent who

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was elected to the Bolshevik Central Committee and caused nearly every other member's arrest.) But not for nothing did Lenin refer to his "fiery Colchian" and judge Stalin "exactly the kind of person I need." By this he meant the consummate *praktik*, an inconspicuous but effective man of action who could rob banks and blackmail tycoons for a party that had officially outlawed criminal adventurism. Enter Stalin's Red Battle Squads, a half-terrorist, half-partisan outfit that was tasked with these *sub rosa* activities, which could really only take place in the Caucasus, long a locus of cosmopolitan banditry.

The mind reels at the fact that the future Five Year Planner once toiled for a Rothschild oil concern in Batumi. Stalin seems to have consolidated his terrorist leadership while incarcerated. Like Abu Musab al Zarqawi, he was a natural leader of the lumpen, semiliterate prison element, and reputation alone drove the success of his Bolshevik Expropriators Club, which procured weapons, facilitated jailbreaks for captured comrades, and executed party turncoats: "Stalin would order the delivery of a letter to a businessman, illustrated with 'bombs, a lacerated corpse and two crossed daggers,' then come calling with a Mauser in his belt to collect." Better still was the Expropriators' version of a Hallmark card—"The Bolshevik Committee proposes that your firm pay ___ roubles"—always delivered by Stalin's tall, armed bodyguard.

Sebag Montefiore is also quite good at showing how the seminary dropout never really abandoned biblical messianism. If Stalin was, in fact, an atheist, then it was mainly for show, to prove his mettle as a Marxist. His metaphysical opportunism could cut both ways. For one thing, a Christ-like self-conception was *necessary* for keeping in thrall a people that, for centuries, had thought of its sovereign as a demiurge. The czar used to be known as the Vicar of Christ on Earth, and Peter the Great once pounded his chest in defiance of someone who suggested the appointment of a holy patriarch. He was that already, said Peter.

Joseph Djugashvili, 1892

PHOTO BY LASKI DIFFUSION / GETTY IMAGES

In Russia, it has never been enough to proclaim, *L'Etat, c'est moi*; one has also to add, *L'Eglise, c'est moi*. This is why Stalin didn't sound so foolish to claim, "The working-class gave birth to me and raised me in its own image and likeness." During World War II, he forgave Winston Churchill for his erstwhile anti-Bolshevism, saying, "All that is in the past and the past belongs to God."

If, like Vladimir Putin, Stalin only used faith as a feint to dupe credulous Western statesmen, then how to explain the terms of his disillusionment upon first encountering the leader of the Bolsheviks? "Lenin had taken shape in my imagination as a stately and imposing giant. . . . Imagine my disappointment when I saw the most ordinary man, below average height, *in no way different from ordinary mortals*." The italics are mine, but the language is hardly that of a strict materialist. It inadvertently recalls Voltaire's observation that, given the whole that would be formed by all the gathered splinters of the cross, surely a giant Christ must have been crucified on it.

Finally, Sebag Montefiore offers what is, to my mind, the most persuasive case against the hoary allegation that Stalin was a czarist spy. Much of the controversy has rested on the only official-seeming document that has come to light: the so-called "Eremin Letter," which appeared in the 1920s and was purportedly written by the colonel of the Tiflis bureau of the Okhrana. The letter was likely forged and has never been corroborated by any other czarist record. True, Stalin may have ordered these destroyed, but Sebag Montefiore points out that many of the Bolsheviks who charged him with betrayal had their timelines confused.

Part of the problem is that Stalin was constantly in touch with *gendarmes* and spooks; it was his job to cultivate them as contacts. Thus, he did the bulk of the recruitment and was on the receiving, not the giving, end of the intelligence nexus. Given Stalin's way with spotting secret agents on sight, it's more than plausible that he knew which imperial authorities (almost all were hopelessly corrupt and greedy) to target for conversion.

Moreover, Okhrana agents were typically well compensated and lived lavish lifestyles, whereas Stalin was perennially poor and bedraggled. The state security apparatus also wanted its men at liberty, so how to explain that between 1908 and 1917, Stalin spent a total of 18 months free? Most convincing of all is the fact that he never managed to guess the real identities of (nevermind murder) "Fikus" and "Mikheil," the two spies who had infiltrated the Baku Bolshevik Party. Stalin liquidated countless others in false pursuit of these slippery figures, and Sebag Montefiore is right to conclude: "Here is the origin of the paranoiac Soviet mind-set, the folly of Stalin's mistrust of the warnings of Hitler's invasion plans in 1941 and the bloody frenzy of his Terror."

Young Stalin is not without its lapses. One of the book's more iffy objectives is common among today's revisionists, who argue that against Stalin's own cult of personality there

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has been erected a formidable cult of historiography that depicts him as a hapless provincial and intellectual featherweight. It was only through a tragicomic series of errors that he ever managed to inherit the throne of international Communism and destroy his more capable enemies, namely Trotsky. Sebag Montefiore, like Robert Service before him, aims to correct this interpretation, largely advanced by Trotsky and his followers, by showing that Stalin was actually a "deep thinker" and man of rare gifts.

Indeed, the "gangster, godfather, audacious bank robber, killer, pirate and arsonist" might well have become the Baudelaire of Georgia had he not discovered revolution. At 16, Stalin wrote romantic poems that earned the respect of the celebrated poet Prince Ilya Chavchavadze, who published them in the newspaper *Iveria*. So moving was the one entitled "Morning" that it evidently inspired an Armenian State Bank official to become Stalin's inside man for the infamous robbery at Yerevan Square in 1907—a heist that made international headlines and lined party coffers, to Lenin's delight.

And yet the mind and character presented in these pages never really rise above the banal, despite the unquestionably extraordinary deeds for which they were responsible. In trying to portray Stalin as an unheralded brain of Bolshevism, Sebag Montefiore fails to cite a single utterance or piece of writing that distinguishes his subject for candlepower. Stalin's contemporaries—not all of whom were tendentious antagonists—grasped his mediocrity better. Noe Jordania, a real Georgian intellectual, told him to study more before presuming to write for the radical newspaper *Kvali*; Lenin expressed shock that Stalin had written his paper on the National Question all by himself—never mind that Nikolai Bukharin and a Viennese maid had to translate the German sources for him.

At times, our author seems too easily impressed by a Russian of average learning from the turn of the last century: "[Stalin] knew Nekrasov and Pushkin by heart, read Goethe and Shakespeare in translation, and could recite Walt Whitman." Trotsky once referred to a comrade as "well-read but not well educated," a terse insight that contains a degree of sophistication Stalin could never approach.

So it's not quite accurate, although it makes for a more epic narrative, to deem the two archnemeses mirror images of each other. Even Stalin admitted his shortcomings once. As recounted in Georgy Dimitrov's diaries, in 1937 Stalin gave a toast at a Comintern dinner, laying credit for his and his cronies' success at the feet of the Soviet "middle cadres" who

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> choose the leader, explain our positions to the masses, and ensure the success of our cause. They don't try to climb above their station; you don't even notice them. Why did we prevail over Trotsky and the rest? Trotsky, as we know, was the most popular man in our country after Lenin. Bukharin, Zinoviev, Rykov, Tomasky were all popular. We were little known, I myself, Molotov, Voroshilov, and Kalinin, then. We were fieldworkers in Lenin's time, his colleagues. But the middle cadres supported us, explained our positions to the masses.

No doubt there are Philistines with a bit of verbal recall who envy the gem-like flame in others without quite knowing how to appreciate it, much less embody it, themselves. Stalin asked Boris Pasternak if Mandelstam was a genius or not, the question that decided the poet's fate. He also chose to leave the author of *Dr. Zhivago* alone for being a "cloud-dweller." Then there was his exquisitely fatuous comment—repeated to perfect effect by a ponderous East German apparatchik in *The Lives of Others*—that "writers are the engineers of the soul." The studious priest-in-training might have smuggled forbidden literature into his bunk at night, but someone who scribbled "ha-ha-ha!" next to Tolstoy's *pensées* on redemption and salvation required an eight-figure body count to be taken seriously by history.

Boris Souvarine, one of Stalin's earliest biographers and more fluent in the Marxist idiom for having been the founder of the French Communist party, conceived of the dictator as, primarily, the product of "peasant psychology" and theological instruction. Wrote Souvarine, the

> age-long tradition which revives to-day the name of Spartacus finds no expression in [Stalin's] words, even though it is continued in his deeds. Nevertheless from a given moment he neither spoke nor wrote without quoting Lenin at every point, as if he owed everything to one book, a work in twenty volumes—just as Cromwell seems to have read only the Bible. If he should happen to quote another writer it is second hand, as if to create the impression, unwillingly revealed, of a modicum of erudition.

A little learning is a dangerous thing, all right, and one shouldn't be fooled by the thin integuments of civilization that mask the most lethal barbarism. W.H. Auden had it right in his "Epitaph on a Tyrant," composed in 1939, the year of the Hitler-Stalin pact:

Perfection, of a kind, was what he was after,
And the poetry he invented was easy to understand;
He knew human folly like the back of his hand,
And was greatly interested in armies and fleets;
When he laughed, respectable senators burst with laughter,
And when he cried the little children died in the streets. ♦

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Nancy Pelosi and Hillary Clinton at the National Prayer Breakfast, 2007

BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

Faith, Hope, and . . .

Evangelicals in America. BY RYAN T. ANDERSON

Up until college, I hadn't met a single evangelical. Growing up in Baltimore and attending a Quaker school, I seemed to meet only liberal Jews and nominal Christians. But Princeton was overflowing with evangelicals. They were at my residential college, in my section of the orchestra, even on my football team.

How strange, I thought, that I'd never even heard of them. Now, thanks to the 2004 election, we all know about them. Or at least we think we do. But reality, and what the media choose to report, are two different things. Most recent books written about evangelicals feature gross politicization, partisan agendas, and at their worst, antireligious bigotry: Evangelicals are fascists, want a theocracy, and psychologically abuse their children.

D. Michael Lindsay, assistant professor of sociology at Rice, knows this isn't the real story, and *Faith in the Halls of Power* tries to paint a fuller picture. The result is a remarkably balanced look at what Lindsay describes as "the most discussed but least understood group in America today." Combining academic rigor with flowing prose, Lindsay presents the fruits of over 10 years of research on elite evangelicals, including unprecedented interviews with 360 of them, among them two former presidents. Lindsay lets these leading evangelicals speak for themselves, but he also points out their inconsistencies and omissions.

Faith in the Halls of Power
How Evangelicals Joined the American Elite
by D. Michael Lindsay
Oxford, 352 pp., $24.95

Far from the stereotypical lower-class hick, evangelicals make their way in the Ivy League and Major League Baseball, on Wall Street and K Street. And their rise is intentional. Evangelicals have long desired platforms to spread the Gospel, to shape culture, and to gain legitimacy among the nation's elite. To achieve this, they created countless institutions dedicated to producing the next generation of leaders. As Lindsay describes their impressive networks of development, we quickly understand how evangelicals went from the religious ghetto to civic prestige in just one generation. Yet much of this increased prominence is due to adult conversions, one-on-one friendships, and an array of elite support groups. Lindsay documents typical evangelical pathways, from getaway weekends at exclusive resorts to Bible studies on Capitol Hill.

Of course, evangelicals are a notoriously hard group to define, but the hallmarks include accepting Jesus as one's lord and savior, fostering a personal relationship with God, viewing the Bible as divinely inspired, and leading others to Christ. Evangelical Christianity is self-consciously not Sunday-only or otherwise compartmentalized; Lindsay notes that there is an "evangelical imperative to bring faith into every sphere of one's life." As a result, evangelicals face unique challenges along their ascent in the largely secular worlds of politics, academics, entertainment, and business (the four arenas documented here). Unwilling to "expunge faith from the way they lead," evangelicals want Christianity to influence all aspects of American life.

Not surprisingly, the evangelical elite are in tension with both the evangelical mainstream and the secular elite. Most pastors and worshippers fail to realize that the elites are trying to lead lives of biblical faithfulness while also attaining the highest levels of success in secular domains. As a result, most elite evangelicals feel alienated from their local churches and can find fellowship only in parachurch organizations dedicated to their unique needs. And they do have unique needs. Evangelical elites describe the careful balances they seek while navigating the waters of power, money, fame, and status—balances that many of their secular colleagues find downright odd (passing on visits to strip clubs, for example, or choosing to live in modest homes). And because evangelical Christianity is so misunderstood and disparaged by secular leaders, Lindsay finds

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some evangelicals compare themselves to homosexuals, having to go through a "coming-out" stage.

As a result, many elite evangelicals self-consciously reject the evangelical ghetto and eschew the media parody that evangelicals are only conservative anti-abortion, anti-gay activists. Their broad political agenda includes environmental protection, human-rights campaigns, and Third World humanitarian interventions. Those who attempt to define evangelicals in political categories fail to understand them as they understand themselves: Religion is primary; all else is secondary.

But the quick rise to power for some has left them without sufficient resources. The lack of a distinctive evangelical tradition of scholarship, art, or social and political theory is a major hurdle that evangelicals need to overcome. Unlike Roman Catholics, evangelicals have little to draw on except the Bible. They don't have a robust theology, and the movement is too young (and, until recently, too isolated) to have many intellectual resources in any of the fields Lindsay addresses. Consider George W. Bush's oft-quoted statement that Jesus is his favorite political philosopher. This wasn't just a way to get votes. In a certain sense Bush was doing, and has done, what many evangelicals do: read government action directly off the pages of the Bible.

Of course, this is a problem for anyone who values limited government, enumerated powers, constitutionalist judges, or most of the other political values that the Western tradition has developed but which don't immediately tug on evangelical heartstrings. And while there is nothing wrong with a broad, biblically informed social vision, disaster can result when this vision is translated into a political vision of government action. Both right-leaning and left-leaning evangelicals play the translate-the-Bible-into-public-policy game, which increases the state's role and undervalues key aspects of constitutionalism, national defense, and market economies that are essential to free societies, though not prominent in Scripture.

But these political confusions pale in comparison to the spiritual maladies that become strikingly clear throughout Lindsay's study. Though he never mentions this phenomenon explicitly, Lindsay recounts numerous stories of evangelical leaders who seem to view much of life as only instrumentally valuable: Why lead a successful business, create movies or music, produce penetrating scholarship, or hold public office, except to acquire a platform to change culture and lead others to Christ?

This is a terribly stunted spiritual and moral outlook. It neglects the basic, intrinsic goodness of creation and human activity. From a traditional Christian perspective, God is pleased by work well done in any upright field, and not just as it's useful for winning converts. Christians can worship God and bring Him glory in their everyday activities. Certainly these can be the occasion for spreading the Gospel, but to see them primarily, or exclusively, as means for evangelism misses the central truth of Christianity: The Word became flesh so that all aspects of human life, not just formal religious behavior, could participate in the divine life.

These are challenges for future generations of evangelicals to take up. Those looking to understand the current generation, however, would do well to read D. Michael Lindsay, for he captures the complexities of evangelical life in a book that no one interested in the current state of American life can ignore.

As for me, though a Roman Catholic, I ended up participating in some evangelical activities at Princeton and formed many strong friendships. My professional life, too, has involved close work with a number of evangelicals. Though theological differences remain, I'm thankful for my evangelical friends. They've made me a better person, and a better Catholic. ♦

The Gang's All Here

Ensembles are a strength, and a weakness, of directors.

BY SONNY BUNCH

When the Oscar nominations were announced back in January, few were surprised that *There Will Be Blood* and *No Country for Old Men* led the way with eight nods. Searing visions of life in the American West, both struck a chord with critics from coast to coast. Each picture also marked a powerful return to form for the creative masterminds involved: *Blood*'s Paul Thomas Anderson and *No Country*'s Ethan and Joel Coen had lost their way in recent years. These movies returned them to critical and popular attention.

But as great as they were, something felt different. *Blood* and *No Country* looked like products created by Anderson and the Coen brothers—and yet, at the same time, they didn't. A key ingredient was missing, something that escapes attention at first but becomes more obvious in retrospect: There were no familiar faces on the screen.

This isn't to say there were no stars. Who hasn't seen a handful of Tommy Lee Jones movies? And Daniel Day-Lewis may not be Tom Cruise, but he's turned in his fair share of memorable performances over the years. No, what I mean is that there were no faces common to the movies of Anderson or the Coen brothers. There were no *regulars*.

For the past quarter-century, Ethan and Joel Coen have made films focused on petty criminals and the consequences of their actions. No two films were directly connected, but there was

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a certain continuity. The same faces popped up again and again, like seldom-seen neighbors reminiscing at the annual block party: "Oh, there's John Goodman in *Raising Arizona* and *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* It's nice to see Jon Polito in *The Man Who Wasn't There*; we lost touch after *The Big Lebowski*. Frances McDormand again? She comes to *everything*."

Paul Thomas Anderson's body of work is much thinner than the Coens', but his two most celebrated films had substantial cast continuity. *Boogie Nights* and *Magnolia* each featured turns by Julianne Moore, William H. Macy, John C. Reilly, Philip Seymour Hoffman, Alfred Molina, Ricky Jay, and Luis Guzmán. Though *Punch-Drunk Love*, Anderson's quirky take on the romantic comedy, dropped most of those actors it still featured memorable performances by Hoffman and Guzmán.

No such overlap existed in their films last year, and each was its creators' best product in almost a decade. Compare that with the work of another Anderson returning to the big screen in 2007. *The Darjeeling Limited* starred Owen Wilson and featured Bill Murray; both have appeared in all but one of Wes Anderson's movies. The Indian character actor and Anderson favorite Kumar Pallana returned, as well, as did Jason Schwartzman, the idiosyncratic star of *Rushmore*.

Critics collectively shrugged their shoulders, and audiences did the same: This was Anderson's worst grossing major release. While it's hard to pinpoint a reason for *Darjeeling*'s poor performance, I'd venture a guess that audiences are tired of seeing the same family squabbles and cute dialogue played out on screen over and over again. You might also argue that Wilson should be contributing in a more constructive way, as Anderson's cowriter. *Bottle Rocket*, *Rushmore*, and *The Royal Tenenbaums* were all written by Wilson and Anderson, but since Wilson's departure from screenwriting, the films have suffered.

As Field Maloney suggested a few years ago, "What if Owen Wilson, America's resident goofy *roué* with the broken nose and the lazy nasal drawl, was the rudder keeping USS *Anderson* on course, steering its captain away from solipsism and ironic overload?"

Wes Anderson isn't the only director employing a familiar troupe to diminishing returns. Christopher Guest, the mockumentary filmmaker behind *Best in Show*, *A Mighty Wind*, and *For Your Consideration*, always works with the same core group of actors. In addition to cowriting those titles with Guest, Eugene Levy stars as well. Joining them in all three films are Michael McKean, Fred Willard, John Michael Higgins, Parker Posey, and Jennifer Coolidge. Not joining them are audiences: Their most recent production grossed less than $6 million. As with Wes Anderson, the Guest formula has grown stale, and you have to wonder just how much that familiarity has dampened audience enthusiasm.

The New Main Street Singers in A Mighty Wind *(2003)*

WARNER BROS.

A director working with a familiar cast is neither new nor something to be avoided. Orson Welles and the members of his Mercury Theatre Company appeared in several of Welles's early pictures, including *Citizen Kane* and *The Magnificent Ambersons*. Another directing Anderson (a Brit, Lindsay) worked with the same group of actors so often on stage and on film that they came to be known as the Lindsay Anderson repertory.

Directors often form connections and tight working relationships with individual actors. Martin Scorsese and Robert De Niro were very close, pairing up eight times in the 20 years between *Mean Streets* and *Casino*; Leonardo DiCaprio appears to be Scorsese's new squeeze, starring in three of his movies during the last five years. Johnny Depp often lends a certain gothic sensibility to Tim Burton's pictures—including this year's winner for best musical/comedy at the Golden Globes, *Sweeney Todd*—and Ben Affleck has brought his idiotic grin to every Kevin Smith movie since his breakout hit, *Clerks*.

I point out these examples to show that there is nothing inherently wrong with a director leaning on familiar actors. But it's important not to get caught in a rut. Now and again directors need to do something really creative and unexpected. This isn't the first time that the Coen brothers have ditched the regulars: Their 1994 homage to the old screwball comedies, *The Hudsucker Proxy*, starred no one the Coens had worked with before (though Charles Durning would go on to appear in several of their films). It wasn't a blockbuster at the time, and critical reaction remains mixed, but it's fair to say *Hudsucker* has become one of their more discussed films. (In truth, the movie feels more like a Sam Raimi flick; in addition to serving as the cowriter and second unit director, the *Spider-Man* director brought along his most frequent contributor, B-actor Bruce Campbell.)

No Country for Old Men may not be quite as different as *Hudsucker*, but it certainly isn't like anything the Coen brothers have done recently. *There Will Be Blood*'s setting and subject matter are certainly a break from Paul Thomas Anderson's previous features. It's good for directors to climb outside the box now and then. And it's nice to see they were rewarded for it on Oscar night. ♦

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Fashion Talks Back

A new show at the Met proves we are what we wear.

BY EVE TUSHNET

Eventually the Cockettes will use up the past and the future and have to rely on the present for their material.
—Clay Geerdes

"That's disgusting—that's just disgusting. It says it's a dress, but it isn't."

The three women behind me at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's "blog.mode: addressing fashion" show were reacting with outrage and betrayal to a John Galliano dress made for Christian Dior Couture—a dress made to look sort of like a dress form and sort of like a mutant. The "dress" seemed to have been stitched together with air quotes, displaying its weirdly placed padding and raveled seams. One of the disgusted ladies had thought, at first, that it was a display meant to educate viewers on how dresses are made, while another had assumed that some of the hanging fabric had simply fallen off the dress by accident.

But no: It was supposed to look like that. The Galliano dress showed one possible road (or *cul-de-sac*) that self-conscious fashion can take. Fortunately, most of the rest of the show used its self-consciousness to craft a language of fashion and a poetry of womanhood, technology, and even death, rather than the exhausted muttering of fashion that can only talk about itself. "blog.mode" is a strangely themeless show. It displays recent acquisitions of the Met's Costume Institute, covering four centuries. The show does indeed have a blog, and even a "blog bar" in the gallery where viewers can comment on the exhibit—"This is just darling," "I don't get it . . . probably never will"—but it's not clear what the 1990s Internet fetishism adds to the show.

blog.mode: addressing fashion
Metropolitan Museum of Art
Through April 13

The fast-changing, self-reflexive, all-consuming surf of the Internet may parallel contemporary *haute couture* in some ways, but "blog.mode" doesn't quite seem to know what to do with those parallels. Nonetheless, the show has some provocative and even stunning pieces, and a few themes do slowly emerge. Perhaps the most interesting questions raised concern women and symbolism: Why are women the alphabet of the language of fashion? While menswear may, in fact, be the more innovative side of fashion (as argued by Anne Hollander's *Sex and Suits: The Evolution of Modern Dress*), here men are an afterthought, represented by one or two outfits. Certainly this approach fits the popular image of fashion, an image dominated by gowns and heels and skinny women with aggressive bone structure.

A second question arises: What's the difference between fashions that make women look like other things, and fashions that make women look like women? The first kind of fashion is obviously strange. Sometimes it works (a lacy bonnet makes a lady look like she's crowned with flowers; a swoony pink Vivienne Westwood dress is sunset on the ocean) and sometimes it doesn't (a silvery Yeohlee Teng dress called "Bellows" is, indeed, bellows-shaped, and basically looks like Industrial Mr. Potato Head), but it's always an odd thing to do to a beautiful woman.

Why do we like this stuff, instead of finding it creepily estranging? Do we like it *because* it's estranging? Does the distance from natural beauty enhance that beauty, perhaps by reflecting the universal human condition of exile?

And when we're not making women look like flowers or insects or shipwrecks, we're saddling them with bustles and corsets and hip-padding, as if without these figure-exaggerating constructions we might not notice that women's shapes are lovely. This approach seems even weirder, and yet it has persisted over the tidal centuries of fashion.

The show features fashion talking back to politics: Yves Saint-Laurent responded to the strident 1970s calls to put political commitment over bourgeois beauty with an adorable, colorful, flowy hippie-chick dress. Fashion talks back to religion: Simon Costin drew on J.K. Huysmans's *A Rebours* to craft an anti-reliquary with vials of his artist friends' bodily fluids, and a "Memento Mori" necklace featuring huge talons, "rotting Victorian jet," and rabbits' skulls with hematite eyes. These pieces are terrific, resentful horror-show art, despite their adolescent dependence on the Church they attempt to demolish.

Fashion talks back to technology: There's a fun "Remote Control" dress, a hard shiny pink carapace that opens by remote control to reveal a huge spray of tulle. The overall effect is very "Barbie's Dustbuster," a playful commentary on the clash between techno imagery and the usual nature imagery associated with women.

Fashion even talks back to death, not only in the *A Rebours* pieces but in the far less accomplished Miguel Adrover outfit made from the late Quentin Crisp's mattress. This holey, homeless-chic piece is reminiscent of Walker Percy's description of a coffee table made from "a stone slab from an old morgue, the blood runnel used as an ash tray," which he suggests is the result of the modern self feeling itself to be "a voracious nought" that must seek meaning outside itself, yet empties of meaning every object it touches:

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The morgue slab is intended to be more meaningful than a coffee table, yet it simply becomes less meaningful than a morgue slab.

And of course, fashion talks back to itself: We have Rei Kawakubo's muddily colored short dress made of interweaving swaths of fabric: It's bondagey and bandagey; it's clearly well done, its draping very balanced and almost flaglike, but it's also neither beautiful nor sublime. Detractors accused the dress of reflecting misogyny, but the real problem is that it's drab.

Other meta-fashion pieces work much better, though often that's because they're talking about fashion *and something else*. Yohji Yamamoto's pleated, coralline red dress, for example, may be a swirly takeoff on the mid-20th-century styles of Madame Grès. But the dress works, in part, because it's also playing off one of the show's recurring themes: the identification of woman and ocean. This identification is sometimes explicit, as in Alexander McQueen's "Oyster" dress, with its shipwreck-tattered bodice and hugely abundant waves of foam-yellow skirt. Other times the sea influence can be seen in the spilling, wavelike wash of ribbons or fabric, making woman's form liquid.

Flowers and the sea are the two images that recur throughout the show. From the first room, with its 18th- and 19th-century gowns plastered with floral colors and shapes, to the final display of a headdress modeled after a Chinese garden, woman is still the *hortus conclusus*, her flowery fashions paradoxically displaying a garden while concealing the body that garden symbolizes.

Meta-fashion can be frustrating, as the ladies behind me learned. I'm sympathetic to the hope that fashion will eventually work through its self-analysis phase and get back to talking about the permanent things: about men and women, loss and springtime, color and change. But "blog.mode" does prove that our current self-obsessed, wiggily weird period of high fashion can produce clothes that are tart, clothes that are beautiful, and even clothes that are sublime. ♦

RISCHGITZ / GETTY IMAGES

'Procession of the Trojan Horse in Troy' (1733) by Giovanni Tiepolo

Winners Take All

The Roman way of war. **BY J.E. LENDON**

In the universities—America's retirement homes for bad ideas—there clings to life the notion that relations between nations can be rendered into a science. The diplomat will scoff: States do not act enough alike, he will say, and character is all. And the more discreet sort of social scientist will add that conclusions about human affairs are only scientific when thousands of human actions can be studied in the aggregate, like the hungry surging of bacteria.

Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War, and the Rise of Rome
by Arthur M. Eckstein
California, 389 pp., $49.95

Nevertheless, would-be scientists rule our departments of international relations, and the name they give to their pseudoscience is Realism. Realism asserts that the international arena is, at all times and places, inherently dangerous and anarchic, and that the international system goads all states willy-nilly towards belligerence.

To this eccentric doctrine historians have wisely paid no great attention. They know that Realism applies poorly even to recent history, for in the 20th century it was mad and bad men and states, rather than the logic of the international system, that tended to cause wars. They revolt at what they consider Realism's unrealistic pessimism and its one-size-fits-all scorn for exceptions. They dread the deadening jargon with which Realism seeks respectability: "unipolarity," "unlimited revisionist state," "unit attribute theory." And they see through the mannerism that Realists share with Marxists, what one might call the language of pretended brass tacks, a lingo of unsentimental hard-mindedness—in Realism the international situation is always "grim," "stern," or "brutal"—that works in secret to persuade readers that the Realist sees beneath pretexts and offers a hidden, unvarnished, truth: Real science should not need the greasy lubrication of rhetoric.

Yet the merit of Realism is to drag the historian out of the brothels (or archives) of the country he studies, slap him a couple of times, and make him look bleary-eyed at the other peoples around. When it can be claimed that one nation behaves differently from others, the Realist constrains us to check whether it is really thus.

J.E. Lendon, professor of history at the University of Virginia, is the author, most recently, of Soldiers and Ghosts: A History of Battle in Classical Antiquity.

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For the Romans, such a check is essential, because the Roman conquest of their empire has often been attributed to their being so singular a folk. First to make this claim was the Greek historian Polybius, who attributed to the Romans an evil Pinky-and-the-Brain-style plan to conquer the Mediterranean world. Most 20th-century historians believed the Romans had expanded to defend themselves, drawn into ever more distant entanglements by their defensive alliances. But in 1979 William Harris returned to Polybius and cried out in his *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome* that Roman expansion had "dark and irrational roots" and Roman war-making "a pathological character." The Romans expanded because they were worse than those around them, the rabid weasel in the rabbit warren. Harris swept away what had gone before, and for 25 years his thesis stood unchallenged, historians accepting his harsh vision of the Romans and, according to their humors, either clucking or drooling over Rome's love of war.

Now finally comes Arthur Eckstein, historian of Rome turned Realist: He has no quarrel with Harris's picture of Roman militarism, for a Realist expects all peoples to be militarists. But for that reason, says he, Roman militarism makes little difference to history because all the powers in the Mediterranean were much the same. All were weasels, because they had to be ready to defend themselves against other weasels. The realities of the international system nudged all in the same direction. Rome, for all its aggressiveness, does not stand out, except that its aggression was more successful.

Here Eckstein is clearly right, and his digging of this jewel from the oily sand of Realism shows how well a clever man can use even a perverse theory. What made the Romans different was not their willingness to get into wars, but their success at winning more of them than they lost.

But why did the Romans win? Here Eckstein appeals to the great 19th-century German historian of Rome, Theodor Mommsen: What set the Romans apart was their ability to incorporate non-Romans into their state, their generosity in granting citizenship. The result was a large—and with their conquests ever larger—population, and that gave them the manpower to win their wars.

This is a useful contrast to the crippling demographic limitations of the classical Mediterranean city-state—Sparta, say—stingy about making new citizens and therefore curbed in its dominion. But in fact, the world Rome faced did not consist mostly of city-states with citizen armies: Rome's great foes consisted of the sprawling Hellenistic kingdoms, leagues of Greek city states, and imperial city states—preeminently Carthage—that had worked around their demographic limits by levying tributes of money upon their subjects and employing armies of mercenaries.

How could Rome's demographic advantages be the decisive factor against enemies such as these? Nor, if the ability to incorporate others was indeed decisive, does that explain Rome's victories over non-city-state peoples like the Celts, who were arguably as well able as the Romans to increase their fighting population as they expanded. To explain Rome's victories over the kings and leagues, Eckstein points also to the political advantages of Rome's republican city-state constitution. But what of great Carthage, which had a constitution of the same type? Realism, finally, predicts that all states should be aggressive—and Eckstein has taken that prediction to heart—but also that all states should adapt themselves similarly to the grim business of nearly constant war.

So if the Romans were different in their arrangements for war, and more effective in war, as they clearly were, Eckstein's Realism requires us to ask why this difference endured so long. Why didn't Rome's enemies adapt and become more like Rome? The answer, of course, is that they had different cultures, and that culture endures even in the face of cataclysm. But if their ways at home were so powerfully unalike, and remained unalike, to the same degree it becomes harder to believe (with the Realists) that all Mediterranean states turned the same face to the world.

Rome's large population was, of course, part of her ability to win. But more important, perhaps, was the willingness of that population to die—the Roman will to continue wars in adversity. At the end of Rome's first war with Carthage, the Carthaginians begged for peace after a grave naval defeat. Yet the Roman alliance had previously lost some 500 ships and 200,000 men in defeats and storms, and Rome fought on.

At the end of the second war, the Carthaginians surrendered after losing a great land battle (Zama) on their home soil. But 15 years before, Rome had lost a greater battle in Italy (Cannae) on top of two previous disasters (Trebia and Trasimene)—and Rome fought on, although her situation after Cannae was worse than Carthage's after Zama. Much the same is true of Roman wars in the East when, time after time, Rome's opponents would yield after setbacks which, although serious, were not nearly as serious as those the Romans had overcome in the Carthaginian Wars. At the point when a normal Mediterranean state, as bellicose as they all were, sued for peace, at that point the Romans hardened themselves for another battle.

It is as if Victor Davis Hanson's "western way of war," that strange willingness to stake everything on a climactic battle, applied to Rome's enemies, who obediently surrendered after a great defeat, but not to Rome. And there is another quality of Roman fighting that set them apart, at least from the Greek world of city-states, kingdoms, and leagues, and also from the Carthaginians: their refusal, even in the face of stark necessity following terrible losses in battle, to ransom their own prisoners of war to refill their thinned ranks. When the Roman captives Hannibal took at Cannae begged Rome to redeem them, Rome discarded them as trash: "Fifty thousand citizens and allies lay fallen around you on that day! If so many examples of courage did not move you, nothing ever will!"

If we are looking for a singularity of the Romans to explain their victories, here it lies: not so much in their generous love of valor—for that, as Eckstein would remind us, was shared by all ancient peoples—but in their stone contempt for cowardice. ♦

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And the Oscar Goes, Too

Horror and tedium at the Academy Awards.

BY JOHN PODHORETZ

This year's excruciatingly boring Oscars stumbled to a conclusion with the victory of a movie that (a) nobody has seen and (b) nobody who *has* seen it is all that crazy about. The 80th annual Academy Awards ceremony was no country for ordinary men, or women, who go to the movies because they want to have a good time. The show's ratings have been declining for a decade, and usually the decline is attributed to the proliferation of other awards shows, the excessive political-style campaigning for the prizes, and the general withdrawal of affect from once-starry-eyed consumers of show business.

These may all have contributed to the ratings woes. But what if the cause is far simpler? What if the Oscars, in a display of perverse artistic integrity, are simply determined to garland movies in which (and performers in whom) no one but a critic or a film-industry professional has the slightest interest?

For his role in the Oscar-triumphant *No Country for Old Men*, the Spanish actor Javier Bardem won as best supporting actor, even though mostly what he did was limp around, use the word "friendo" menacingly, and carry a magical oxygen tank that could blow holes in anything. Bardem was so excited by his triumph that he made out with his mother on national television. The best you can say about it was that it wasn't quite as horrifying as the moment when Angelina Jolie made out with her brother on national television after saying she was "so in love" with him from the Oscar podium.

Daniel Day-Lewis won as best actor for an overwhelming performance in another movie that left many viewers scratching their heads, and whose signature line in *There Will Be Blood*—"I ... drink ... your ... MILKSHAKE!"—has already entered the annals of camp. (Check out idrinkyourmilkshake.com for all the hijinks.)

Day-Lewis, a genuinely great actor, is 50 years old and has long hair and a pair of earrings. Maybe the Oscar he won will serve as his comfort object during his midlife crisis. Better that than a younger girlfriend or a Ferrari convertible that he will crack up when his long hair blows into his eyes. The only interesting moment in his speech was when the camera cut to his wife, Rebecca Miller, who looked like she was wearing the wallpaper at a New Orleans bordello.

Marion Cotillard took the best-actress trophy for playing a real-life drunken, drug-addicted singer—given all that, how could she possibly have lost?—of whom not a single soul in America under the age of 50 has heard. That's fine, since nobody in America has ever heard of Marion Cotillard, either. For all Oscar voters knew, they were actually voting for the real Edith Piaf.

Tilda Swinton, who looks like she was skinned to appear in one of those "Bodies" exhibits, won as best supporting actress for the year's most excessive performance as a nervous-wreck lawyer who trembles like a leaf even when she orders hit men to take out rival barristers in *Michael Clayton*. Swinton, it is said, lives in a *ménage à trois*. Perhaps she and her roommates should take the Bardems out to dinner.

None of the acting winners is an American. Aside from giving Tom Tancredo heart palpitations, and raising traditional fears about the loose mores of Europeans and actors, what does this portend? Very little. The same thing happened 43 years ago when NAFTA wasn't even a twinkle in the eye of evil globalizers who want to drive every resident of Ohio into poverty. What is different this year is that three of the four non-Americans—Britons Day-Lewis and Swinton, and Spaniard Bardem—are *playing* Americans in movies set in the United States. This is a grotesque violation of the spirit of immigration law. I mean, are these *really* jobs Americans couldn't or wouldn't do? I can think of a dozen American actors who could have limped around in an oxygen tank with a Herman's Hermit hairdo calling people "friendo." And as for Tilda Swinton's part, why not just hire Calista Flockhart if you want an insanely nervous anorexic with invisible skin?

It is true that there is no better actor in the world than Daniel Day-Lewis, so he deserves a waiver from the INS, even though he's *so* not American that his father Cecil was actually the Poet Laureate of England. Even more impressive than that bit of trivia is the method by which Day-Lewis the Younger figured out a way around the standard problem of English actors attempting American accents, which is that they stress the "r" too heavily. (For an example, check out Swinton's *Michael Clayton* colleague, Tom Wilkinson, who hits every R like a railsplitter hurtling an axe into a log.) Day-Lewis simply copied the voice patterns of John Huston, specifically the John Huston who played the evil Noah Cross in *Chinatown*. By doing a John Huston impression, he escaped the accent trap. Genius!

There was a movie this year everybody liked a lot. It was called *Juno*. It was nominated, too. Once it would have won. Once we might have cared. ♦

John Podhoretz, editorial director of Commentary, *is* The Weekly Standard*'s movie critic.*

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Parody

They proclaimed George W. Bush Day in Benin, thronged streets by the tens of thousands in Tanzania and christened the George Bush Motorway in Ghana. As he wrapped up his Africa trip in Liberia on Thursday, they sang about him on the radio, crooning his name and warbling, "Thank you for the peace process."

—Washington Post, *February 22, 2008*

ESDAY, MARCH 5, 2008

Bush to Remain in Africa Until 2009; Approval Rating Rockets to 96 Percent

By PETER BAKER
Washington Post Staff Writer

DUBYAVILLE, Liberia, March 4 — Rather than deal with antiwar protesters at home, conduct interviews with an irritable press, and meet with the Democratic leadership in Congress, President George W. Bush announced today he will spend the remaining months of his term in Africa, specifically residing in Dubyaville, the capital of Liberia once known as Monrovia.

"How else to honor a nation and a people than to remain here as long as I can and share some of that love?" asked the president. "I mean, they renamed a city after me and it was already named after an American, Marilyn Monroe." Aside from being called president, Mr. Bush has added the titles of His Excellency, Commander in Chieftain, King of Scotland, Prince of Zamunda, and Mufasa. "I will not tire, I will not falter, and I will not fail to enjoy these last few months being the most popular person on the continent, though I have been told I will sweat. It's a jungle out there."

News of Mufasa's extended stay in Africa was greeted by massive street celebrations in Dubyaville as well as in Lauratown (formerly Lagos), Jennabarbara (formerly Dar es Salaam), and New Barney (formerly Nairobi). In Liberia, the entire month has been declared a national holiday—Crawfordfest.

According to White House sources, the decision was not difficult. Said one official: "Mufasa would much rather fight malaria and dengue fever than Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid." But moving to Africa for the next 11 months proved a greater ordeal for the rest of the White House staff and some have chosen to remain in Washington. Others have agreed to serve at the behest of His Excellency provided a few demands be met. One such adviser, the newly elected mayor of Gergenville,

See BUSHMAN, *A5, Col.1*

JIM WATSON / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

Members of the crowd dressed in clothing picturing President George W. Bush await his arrival at the State House in the Tanzanian capital of Jennabarbara—formerly Dar es Salaam—on February 17, 2008.

Two Clintons, Two Laredos

By DAN BALZ
Washington Post Staff Writer

LAREDO, Tex., March 4 — While Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton campaigned tirelessly in the Lone Star State, spending a few days here in Laredo, her husband was campaigning on his wife's behalf in nearby Nuevo Laredo. But when reporters met up with Mr. Clinton and noted the bordertown is in Mexico, he appeared flummoxed.

Asked where he had spent the last

"I had no idea," said the red-faced president. "The people were so friendly. I felt right at home." Mr. Clinton said he had a plate of nachos and a few beers in a section known as Boy's Town and later saw a donkey

See SHOW, *A5, Col.1*

the weekly Standard
MARCH 10, 2008

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